

DISCLAIMER: Nothing's mine!

Yes this is another Time-Travel story with Harry discovering his true heritage blah blah blah! But I hope to add some of my own twists so hope you enjoy it.

PROLOGUE

Avada Kedavra - Two Simple Words

The sun finally showed brightly from the clouds. The remnants of war laid all around the young green-eyed boy but he couldn't care less. Everything had gone to plan and yet everything was destroyed beyond repair.

As Harry made his way up to the castle that he once called his home, he felt a pang of nostalgia. Everything was the same and yet it was all so different. But things would change now, for the better, he could just feel it.

"What do you mean by that you stupid bitch?"

"I mean exactly what you're hearing you arse!"

Harry followed the sound of the familiar voices and stood outside a door of an empty classroom.

Now Harry was after all, a good lad, but the sound of his bickering best friends (or favourite couple now, if the kiss was anything to go by!) piqued his attention.

"No Ronald! You're wrong! How could you ever do this to us? Get away from me! Don't touch me you son of a bitch."

That was all Harry needed to hear and he was about to burst in and stop Ron from doing something he'd live to regret. Yet he was stopped in his tracks by the last voice he'd thought he'd hear in such a conversation.

"Ronald let her go!" Came the voice of the fiery redhead that Harry was so taken with.

Ah Ginny! Of course she would stop Ron.

Nothing however could ever prepare Harry to deal with the next sentence that came out of Ginny's mouth, "I don't know how she did it, but she broke through the imperious. You need to reign her in and marry her, then Harry is mine and Hermione is yours forever." She said, a slight dreamy and insane note in her tone.

"Right you are Gin." Came Ron's happy voice.

"RONALD BILIUS WEASLEY! DON'T YOU DARE-" But her words were stopped mid-rant with a loud "Imperio" and Hermione was once again Ron's toy.

Harry had had enough and burst through the door.

Ron and Ginny were shocked and all the colour drained from their faces.

"H-Harry m-mate, its-its not what it looks like at all!" Came Ron's half-hearted attempt to save himself. Honestly, did he think of Harry to be that daft?

"Shut up Ron and release Hermione now!"

"No Harry please listen to me-"

"Shut the fuck up you lying bitch! I thought I loved you and this is what I come home to? You two manipulating and trying to control my best friend and me!"

Ginny paled even more and Ron looked murderous.

"Bloody Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived, the Chosen-One, the Master-of-Death, the Defeater-of-Voldemort, the Light-of-Hope, blah blah blah! Did I miss something out your holiness? You get everything, you can have anyone, why have you to get Hermione too? Why can't I get her? I deserve her more than you do, you selfish prick!"

"Is that really how much our friendship meant to you Ron? Is this all you ever saw as noteworthy?" Harry asked with naked emotion in a small voice that chilled Ginny and Ron to the bone.

"Yes! Ok Mister-I'm-the-Best with money and girls and fame! You were my family's hook, you were what we needed to rise up from our poverty and in turn we gave you a family. It was an equal bargain so stop being such a bitch about it! I thought I had had enough of you during the Triwizard Tournament but Mum made me see reason and I apologized to keep you bound to the family."

"I see." Was all Harry said as he looked pointedly at Ron.

"And you? Was it all a lie as well?" He asked Ginny.

"No Harry! I love you! You are my life! I've loved you ever since I was a little girl! And now you've truly become my knight in shining armour and I am yours for the taking."

Harry ground his teeth in frustration.

"I see."

After what seemed like an eternity of endless silence, Harry raised his head from facing the ground, his emerald green eyes, light-years darker.

"I HATE liars!"

A huge onslaught of energy shot out of Harry and literally threw the two youngest Weasleys off their feet as they banged into the nearby wall unconscious.

Harry walked up to Hermione and brandishing the Elder Wand, relieved her of the Imperius.

Hermione looked confused and dazed as she looked around until her eyes fell upon her emerald-eyed saviour.

"Harry! Oh-Harry!" Was all she said as she flung herself onto him and hugged him as tightly as she could manage. Tears freely streaming down her eyes.

"I tried to fight them." She said in between sobs, "Since fifth-year, I've been trying to get you free of their control but I didn't know how to tell you without angering you. Then he started controlling me! Using me! I couldn't break away Harry."

She broke down sobbing in his arms and he held her tight, gaining some kind of insight on how truly bad the situation was.

"You're safe now Hermione." He said keeping her as close as possible, "I'll never let this happen to you again. Never."

Harry turned around and began leaving from the classroom. Unbeknownst to him or the crying brunette in his arms, an angry redheaded girl was rising from the floor and was not happy with the sight in front of her.

'That bookworm is finally doing what she always wanted to do, she's taking away my Harry, my prince! He's mine!'

That's when Ginevra Molly Weasley made the biggest mistake of her life. In a bout of misguided revenge, she raised her wand and muttered the first curse that came to her mind,

"Avada Kedavra!"

Green light surged forward and the spell met its target. Silently, the now happy brunette fell to their floor in a lifeless heap. An enraged green-eyes boy turned around and flashed dangerously at the redhead who was smiling maniacally.

"There Harry, she's gone! Now you're all mine and we can be happy together. Ron might be unhappy I had to kill his future wife, but I'm sure we can find another mudblood for him."

An angry wail of pain and unbelievable agony echoed through the halls of the Hogwarts and a mighty burst of magic burst through the young wizard. A swirling mass of a tornado expelled from the body of the young man and engulfed everything it came in sight of. Yet the obsessive girl didn't back down and tried to get his attention.

"Harry love! This is not the time for a tantrum! You're hurting me, I'm the one you love, me! Dumbledore said so!" She continued relentlessly, never letting her illusion dissipate.

'Dumbledore knew!'

Another angry blast of magic spread through the empty classroom and within seconds everything in the vicinity was blown up. Nothing remained.

Desecrated debris of fallen celebrators greeted the eyes of anyone who would pass by the now-remains of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Distantly, the laugh of a young man could be heard as he looked at the remains around him, everyone who survived, was gone...

He bent down and picked up the heap that was the lifeless body of possibly his only best friend, the one person who truly cared for him and he was undone. He broke into sobs.

How could he have been so stupid? How could he have been so naïve? Grandfather-like man comes every year to save abused child from hated relatives and instantly becomes the hero. He keeps the said child in their care to make sure he's meek and malleable. He makes sure that the Godfather is kept away permanently in Azkaban. He controls and manipulated the child until he hones the child into a venerable weapon. How could Harry have not realized it?

If he ever got his hands on that old fool again, he would personally kill him and make Snape's life a whole-lot easier.

But now everything was gone. Voldemort was vanquished, Hermione was avenged, the traitors punished. Now what or where could Harry begin his baleful existence?

Harry raised the Elder Wand to his temple, pressing onto his cursed, lightning-bolt scar and said the two words that had destroyed his life since the Halloween of 1981. He uttered them precisely and accurately and hoped that he would find solace in what is to come after death, maybe he might be able to meet Hermione in the afterlife.

"Avada Kedavra."

A flash of green light...

A young man aged by war...

A lifeless heap on the ground...

A grand victory with no one to celebrate it...

After all, someone once told Harry that "Death was nothing more than the next great adventure."

TBC

Well? What do you think? Reviews are appreciated and wholeheartedly accepted, including flames (though that doesn't mean I like them)!

~ Gatonio

CHAPTER 1

Things Will Change

Oblivion... Blissful oblivion... These were the only words running through the mind of young Harry Potter as he ended his life and moved onto the afterlife. He saw himself rising and going higher and higher and higher.

The sensation was somewhat similar to that of a portkey but it didn't cause turbulence in his stomach. He felt absolutely fine as he was hurled across time and space awaiting what came next.

Suddenly, there was an abrupt halt and Harry was thrown to the ground a little roughly. He picked himself up and dusted his robes.

'Huh, the afterlife looks a lot like the Ministry of Magic' he thought.

Indeed in front of him, was a similar large entering room like there was in the Ministry of Magic, except, instead of the grandiose that one would see in the Ministry, this place looked shabbier and had a sad aura about it. But having lived in the time of the Second War, Harry thought nothing of it and pressed on.

He came in front of the Security Check and was screened by a peculiar device that oddly enough reminded him of a muggle prod. When the guard gave him the affirmative, he continued on with the huge mass of people surrounding him.

He looked up when the crowds stopped moving and saw a large board with millions of names on it. The board looked eerily similar to that of King's Cross Station but it was infinitely bigger. He searched through the endless lists of alphabetically organized names that constantly flashed and found among the list, finally:

EVANS-POTTER, Harry James, Room 140,892.

For the first time in his life, Harry saw his mother's last name attached to his own and was slightly annoyed as no one ever told him that his parents had followed a muggle tradition of gracing their child with both their last names.

His parents!

He could actually finally meet them now that he was dead. That thought never even crossed his mind until now. Also Sirius and Remus and Tonks and everyone else he had lost in the War. Perhaps he could finally gain his peace in the afterlife.

"S'way fer Rooms 1 ta 1,000,000!" Came a sharp call from somewhere to Harry's right.

Harry turned and followed the voice. It came from a reasonably well dressed English-looking gentleman and he was directing the mass of people coming his way.

"Excuse me sir, but where is Room 140,892?" Harry asked politely.

The old man eyed him warily and said in a very typical Yorkshire accent, "I's som'wh'er 'roun 'ere. Go'n strai't 'nd ye should see it lad."

"Thank you sir."

Harry made his way forward a little sluggishly, noting the exactly identical rooms flanking him on both sides as he kept going. The walk continued and the room numbers began to come closer to 140,892. Finally, Harry arrived at his designated room and it said, 'EVANS-POTTER, Harry James' on the outside.

Harry took a calming breath and walked in. Of all the things he thought he'd see at his judgement, this was definitely not one of them. In front of him sat an important looking man with a long beard that oddly enough reminded Harry of Dumbledore (the old goat!).

"Um... Excuse me..."

The man held up his finger effectively silencing Harry and as he continued to read something of a parchment. After what seemed like an eternity, the ancient man looked up from his papers and gave Harry a sharp look.

Harry was a bit unnerved by this man's staring as if scrutinizing Harry.

"Hmpf", he said absently, "Took you long enough to catch onto the old coot and his merry red bunch."

Harry was flabbergasted, this man knew how he had been betrayed and was mocking him!

"Sit down Mr. Evans-Potter, we have plenty to discuss."

Still a bit shaken and slightly annoyed with the man's comment, Harry took the seat in front of the man's desk and waited patiently.

"I'm your Guardian Angel and Effective Life Manager, you can call me Bob."

"Hello Bob, its nice to meet you." Harry said pleasantly.

"Well, to be honest, I was not interested in meeting you for at least another century and a half. But you decided to hasten things a bit and offed yourself way to early. Then again, I don't blame you kid, you've had it all bad. But on the plus side, you have an opportunity to change all of that."

Up till now Harry was only half-listening but when he said he could change things, Harry perked up.

"What can I change? Can I save anyone?" Harry asked hopefully.

"Well Mr. Evans-Potter, it seems you've been subjected to a cruel trick by Fate and Destiny. You see, you" he said pointing to Harry, "are a child handpicked by Destiny to be a part of great things."

"Figures. Of course Destiny had to screw around with me." Harry mumbled weakly.

"On that point, I agree with you; Destiny seemed to have gained some perverse pleasure in annoying you so. To make matters worse, Fate, Destiny's sister, had also chosen you. Ultimately, in a battle of who was truly in power of you, Fate and Destiny tried to ruin you and still give you a shot at what they had prepared for you. Of course, in the midst of their enjoyment, they made a grave error and left you alone and friendless, hardened by war and at a loss of all your loved ones. They, so to speak, kinda realized they went too far."

Harry was seething in rage, "This was all a bloody GAME to them! Everything I've been through: The Dursleys, Voldemort, the murders, deaths, everything!"

"I'm sorry." The old man seemed genuinely apologetic. "Yet I have a solution for you. You see once Fate and Destiny realized their folly and also surmised how much of the plan of the Great One, they foiled in their silly game, they entered the realm of Chaos, the third sister. Let me tell you this, Chaos was not pleased." He smiled slightly at this but Harry was completely floored.

"So you're saying that I now have three insane goddesses trying to kill me! Good thing I'm already dead." Harry mumbled weakly.

"See that is what the Great One is offering you. Let me tell you this is a magnanimous offer, the last time it was made was nearly a 1,000 years before your time. Chaos has agreed to sponsor your rebirth, we only need your consent."

Harry sat and pondered his situation for awhile.

"Let me get this straight, I will now officially not die and be sent back to the land of the living, where everyone I live is dead anyway?" Harry said a bit sarcastically.

"Well if we were trying to fix things, we'd have a bit more insight than that. No, you will be sent to a time before the final war, with all your knowledge and memories intact. It is up to you however to take action. Fate and Destiny will try to complicate things for you but you have the express permission of the Great One to alter the timeline if necessary. After all, the current timeline you left, is not exactly a pleasant one. Every time Fate or Destiny try to impose a grim order upon you, Chaos will do what she does best, cause chaos so you can change things."

"Oh." Harry was once again floored by this man and was effectively speechless.

The man smiled, but that changed to a frown, "however, this is only a choice, as of now you are dead, which means you can move onto the afterlife if you please. You've already rejected the afterlife once to kill Voldemort while you were in the Forbidden Forest. That was

an option given to you because you had mastered Death when you went in there. The same choice is present for you now."

Harry thought about it: on one hand, he could meet his parents, Sirius, Remus and Hermione and give the Weasleys and Dumbledore a piece of his mind. On the other hand, he could go back: save Sirius and give him the life he never had, let Remus and Tonks get a chance to raise Teddy and maybe, tell Hermione how he feels as well.

Although he would have to face Voldemort again and that was a terrible option but he had done it once and he could try again. The worst of it would be that he would die and he's already done that.

His decision was made.

Harry slowly nodded his heads, "I fully understand your proposal relayed by the Great One and Chaos and accept it."

Bob nodded and smiled widely and he began to grow young. Harry was speechless once again.

Bob chuckled. "Fear not, your choice of life has given me the opportunity to be young again as I effectively manage your life, the next time we meet, you will hopefully be as grey-bearded as I was."

Now it was Harry's time to laugh.

"Sounds good, so when do I leave?"

"Now and oh, before I forget, do head to Gringotts this time and inquire about your heritage, the heritage of the Potters and the Evans. You might find it interesting."

Harry nodded and the two were about to rise from their seats when Bob's desk grew bright white and seconds later a bright blue orb with a letter attached appeared.

Harry looked at Bob for an explanation but the young Bob just looked at the orb with fascination.

He looked at Harry and said, "Well what are you looking at me for? It says your name on the letter!"

Harry jumped at the surprise snap and snatched the letter; it was addressed to Harry Evans-Potter.

Dear Harry,

The orb will prove to be of immense value to you if you let it bond with you. It will merge with your magical core and strengthen it. Who knows, you might get some 'special' gifts along the way (wink wink).

Oh and Fate and Destiny (my infamous sisters) have decided to embody themselves personally in people who greatly affect your life, namely, Albus Dumbledore and Tom Riddle Jr. respectively.

Don't worry, with you and me screwing things around, they'll be so weary wondering what comes next, they'll just fall apart!

Stay chilled and please get some better OWLs this time round (again the orb might help *hint hint*), your mother has literally chewed my soul apart to mention that in this letter.

Also your entire family, especially your mother and father are extremely proud of you and what you have achieved. I am too as you are one of my children: a child of pure and utter Chaos. Do well son...

Kisses (nice and sloppy ones in inappropriate places *wink*),

Chaos.

PS – I haven't actually decided where I'm dumping you, well, you'll know when you get there.

Harry was more than a little surprised by the gift of the orb and being so informally addressed by Chaos and a little blush had crept up on him reading her pleasantries. Yet he was secretly only rereading the lines about his mother and father. They truly were watching over him!

"Are you ready Mr. Evans-Potter?"

Harry nodded but added as a quick afterthought, "Why do you call me Evans-Potter, why not just Potter?"

Bob looked at with a small smile and said, "Because that is how you were named and it is your title and heritage."

Harry smiled slightly and gathered the orb staring at it reverently.

Bob whispered a quick 'good luck this time around, don't screw it up!' and pressed a button, which threw Harry into a portal. He felt a familiar tug on his navel and growled internally, he hated portkeys!

He saw himself flying once again across space and time. Yet this time, it felt more like being flung than floating. He slowly came closer and closer to the surface till he saw Grimmauld Place appear. He went through the roof and saw a somewhat tired and younger version of himself tiptoeing up the staircase. As he was approaching the door, BANG!

Spirit Harry crashed into his younger counterpart and merged, and it hurt like a BITCH! Distantly, Harry could swear he heard someone laughing at his pain.

A little worse for wear, Harry continued on and reached the door. This time when it opened he wasn't surprised when a mass of bushy hair crashed into him and engulfed him in a hug that would put Mrs. Weasley to shame.

Hermione...

It really was her... The same strawberry smell of her hair, the same petite frame, the same running heartbeat always worrying about him. How could he have not fallen in love with her before?

After a little while, Hermione felt a bit awkward, as Harry hadn't made a single move to let her go. Instead he had held onto her tighter and refused to allow any space between them.

She gently tried to disentangle herself from Harry only to be forced back into his arms and pressed against Harry's hard chest where his heart was racing a mile an hour.

"Harry..." She mumbled weakly.

"Hermione..." Harry sighed contentedly, burying his face in her hair.

Hermione felt herself blushing and from somewhere there was a loud sound of throat clearing.

Finally Harry let her go and turned to Ron, his 'best mate' since first-year.

"Harry mate, how are you?" He said jovially, acting as if nothing had happened between Hermione and him.

It took every ounce of Harry's limited acting skills to maintain his façade and sport a convincing smile. "I'm great Ron. But summer without you guys has been dull."

Hermione's smile lit up the room and Ron looked happy, though the jealous glint in his eye was ever so obvious to Harry.

"I'm so glad, you're not angry." Hermione whispered.

"With you Hermione? Angry at my one and only friend and advisor extraordinaire, where would I be if I'd be angry with you? After all, I know you guys would've written to me if you could, obviously someone was holding you back." Harry said smoothly.

"YES!" She screeched a bit too enthusiastically. Harry noted she really was relieved he wasn't mad. "I mean..." she blushed, "Dumbledore made us promise not to tell you anything. He said owl-post could be intercepted and-" Hermione was in full teacher mode.

Harry chuckled thinking with morbid curiosity that he had almost lost her. He stopped her mid-explanation with a soft kiss on her forehead. That got her attention and she blushed even more.

Although Harry's back was facing Ron, he could positively feel the daggers he was throwing at him with his eyes. Yet when he turned around Ron seemed as happy as ever, pretending nothing was going on at all.

"So where is this place?" Harry asked lightly.

Hermione was still in a daze and shocked with his kiss that Ron decided to answer and did really well in keeping the annoyed tone

out of his voice, "We're at the headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix, a society founded by Dumbledore way back when they fought You-Know-You in the first war."

'Well this feels like déjà vu' Harry thought cynically.

"Unfortunately, we don't get to attend meetings." Ron grumbled.

Harry simply shrugged it off, "I'm sure they think we're too young for this, its alright, when they come to their senses, we'll get in the meetings."

Hermione was surprised by Harry's maturity and Ron was annoyed, he wanted a stronger reaction so he could drive a subtle wedge between Harry and Hermione.

"Oh Harry but what the Ministry is doing to you. With the hearing and everything, it's completely unfair! I've read all about it, they simply can't expel you." Hermione said passionately.

Harry turned to face her with a determined expression, something he had mastered after being the leader of the light for a year and a half after Dumbledore's fall. Hermione in his timeline had once told him it was brilliant and scary, just like her intelligence.

Hermione and Ron both were struck by the expression and the conversation dropped there to be replaced by a quiet silence among the trio.

Harry smiled slightly, happy he still had the expression at his disposal in his 15-year-old self. He wrapped his arms around Hermione's shoulders and bent down to look at her straight in the eye, his lips inches away from hers and when he spoke, Hermione swore she felt she was being caressed by his words, "My dear, dear Hermione, even if they did expel me, you'd find a way to tutor me and get me through my OWLs with 'O's anyway."

Hermione blushed a brilliant shade of crimson, darker than Weasley hair and muttered incoherently about 'silly boy', 'serious situation' and 'thanks'.

Ron visibly purpled as well, kind of like Uncle Vernon, Harry thought.

Yet Ron schooled it and said happily, "I'll get the twins, Hermione why don't you go get Ginny and we'll let Harry get sometime to rest, after all, it was a long journey."

He tried to pry Hermione away from Harry but Harry would have none of the cheeky bastard. He didn't know when he was going to 'imperio' Hermione and he had to be prepared.

"That's okay Ron. You can go get them, I have something to discuss with Hermione anyway."

Harry quite noticeably pulled Hermione towards himself even though her hand was in Ron's hand as he tried to pry her away. Ron stared murderously at Harry and was failing terribly in reigning it in. Hermione was utterly bemused and more than a little surprised by Harry's possessiveness. She couldn't help wonder what the hell he was playing at.

Ron nodded and left, seeing he was out of arguments; seething in rage and planning revenge.

Hermione disentangled herself and asked quietly, "so what did you want to discuss?"

"Nothing really," Harry said boldly pushing Hermione against his body once more.

Hermione tried to playfully get away from him but internally her senses were screaming out that something was up.

"Harry...!"

Harry laughed as Hermione unsuccessfully rubbed herself against him while trying to run away but Harry's Quidditch-hardened hands would have none of it.

"Hermione, you do know what happens to boys when girls rub themselves against them, don't you?" He guffawed loudly at the rainbow red colour of her face as she froze in his embrace.

She regained herself and realizing she was still in his embrace and had the nagging feeling something was pressing against her near Harry's nether region she squealed,

"HARRY!"

The door came open just then and four redheaded teens came through wearing extremely different expressions.

REVIEW PLEASE

I wanted to save Cedric but decided against it, it would've made things too complicated. Either way, hope you enjoyed it.

Kisses

~ Gatonio

CHAPTER 2

Student Teaches the Teacher

The four redheads were more than a little surprised seeing their favourite hero and resident bookroom in such a passionate embrace.

Hermione 'eeped' at the stares and jumped out of Harry's grasp. Internally Harry sighed heavily, he really did love to have her in his arms.

"Hello-hello Harry" said Fred or was it George?

"looks like someone-"

"is trying to score points-"

"with Hermione." They chorused

"What-no!" Said an indignant Ron, "he had to discuss something with her that's all."

Ginny just stared pensively at Hermione's discomfort and nervousness and Harry's cool demeanour.

"Right," said Hermione, "he had to tell me something."

"Sure-"

"We believe you." They deadpanned.

"Say how about we eavesdrop on the order meeting? You guys still have those extendable ears, right?" Said Ron trying to steer the conversation away from Harry and Hermione.

Hermione sighed in relief and eagerly threw herself in the conversation. When they were about to leave to eavesdrop Harry cleared his throat.

"Sorry guys, I'm just a bit grimy after all the flying. You guys head off and I'll see you there after freshening up."

The twins and Hermione shrugged, Ginny was a bit tensed and Ron ground his teeth, "you weren't tired a few minutes ago when you wanted to talk to Hermione."

"Good point Ron." Harry decided to play with the angry redhead while he had the opportunity, "I guess having Hermione in my arms energizes me and scares the tiredness away, right Hermione?"

Harry winked at Hermione and she blushed for the fourth time that evening in a span of 20 minutes and Ron looked livid. The twins had identical grins plastered on their faces and Ginny looked like she had eaten something foul.

"Alright Harry, see you there..." The twins said dragging the three shocked teenagers with them.

Harry chuckled and immediately started searching through his clothes as the door closed. He sighed in relief when he found the glowing orb of Chaos in his pocket.

He pulled it out and began to examine the curious item. As his fingers touched the surface a message appeared through the misty fog:

Grasp it in your right hand and say 'Show me Chaos'.

Harry chuckled at the dual meaning of the password and did so.

Immediately, he was hurled into a strange, misty, foggy terrain and he couldn't discern anything.

"Hello Harry, glad you could grace me with your presence." The voice came from somewhere, everywhere and yet nowhere.

Harry turned back and forth in confusion and finally shrugged in defeat, no point in trying to see a goddess, if she doesn't want to reveal herself.

"Glad I could come Chaos. So... um... what's up with life?" Harry immediately mentally kicked himself, who asks a goddess about 'life' so casually?

There was a loud giggling noise from the surrounding and Chaos spoke again, "Your humour impresses me Chosen One. I'm as fine as ever now that there's chaos to spread in the timeline and give my rule-oriented sisters a kick up their foul arses."

Harry chuckled, "I agree. So will you be teaching me extremely unbelievable magicks to defeat Voldemort?"

"You'd wish that, wouldn't you? Well yes, I'll be giving you gifts of magicks but not teaching you anything. Because teaching is a waste of time when I can just give it to you."

"Um... Isn't that kind of jumping the gun. Like all gods and goddesses are always going on and on about the journey and learning and what-not?" Harry said uncertainly.

"Yeah I know that would be a typical response from one of my sisters, but not me! I believe in instantaneous results. So Mr. Harry James Evans-Potter, you are now given the gift of my tongue to appear as a Seer, also you will be quick-learner. You already are a phenomenal occlumens so no need for that. You will be given an animagus form of my liking when I decide what it is. You will also have a decent mastery over the concepts of Ancient Runes and Arithmancy so you can join a certain someone in those classes and take your OWLs in them. Now remember, when I whisper to you, follow my lead."

"Got it Chaos."

With that Harry reappeared in his body holding the orb in his hand. As he was wondering where to put it, the orb slowly merged with his skin and was indiscernibly invisible in a few seconds.

"Well I guess I'll always have her on me then."

Harry made his way to join the Weasleys plus Hermione after showering and getting into a better set of clothes. When he moved downstairs he heard the meeting disperse and Order members begin to leave.

'Enter the room, state your presence, make a prophecy'.

The next thing Harry knew, his body was bounding down the stairs and was in the kitchen as Molly Weasley uncharmed the door to let the kids in.

The kids and Mrs. Weasley looked at Harry with surprise but that passed soon. Sirius smiled winningly at Harry and was about to engulfed him in a hug when Harry took one step forward and everyone in the kitchen froze save Dumbledore who was making his way to the fireplace.

"Light Lord" came Harry's raspy voice, much like Trelawney when she gave prophecies.

Everyone was shocked but no one said a word. Dumbledore stopped in his tracks and stared with bewilderment at Harry who stared back. It took the experience of all of Dumbledore's years not to fly back in fear for Harry's usual emerald-green eyes were golden.

"Wrongs shall be righted Light Lord,

The Fallen shall be avenged,

A no-name will rule by the Chosen's side,

Lies will be undone,

The beacon of truth will blow.

At the meeting of Lion and Eagle,

The Serpent shall yield,

The Badger will break free,

Saving the viewer of history.

The Dark Lord will face retribution,

The Chosen One will rise,

The Mooner and Grim will eat the rat,

The shapeshifter shall reveal the wrongdoers,

The Manipulator will fall, Light Lord,

Wrongs shall be righted Light Lord,

The Fallen shall be avenged..."

Harry was silently impressed with his rant and when he felt his eyes turning back to normal and the power of his faculties coming back to him, he stared at everyone in mock worry.

"How did I get here?" Harry ventured.

No one spoke, only Hermione screamed loudly and fainted. Harry ran back to her and gathered her in his arms before Ron could even think of laying a finger on her.

"Hermione, are you okay? Hermione! Hermione!" Harry was genuinely worried now, this was not planned.

"Why are you just standing there, do something!" That started a flurry of movement and people gathered close.

Molly Weasley brought some water for the 'poor dear' and Ron was trying everything he could to take hold of Hermione but Harry wouldn't even let him touch her. Dumbledore came forward and silently enervated her. Hermione breathed in heavily and stared at Harry in awe and wonder.

Harry was relieved when she was okay, "Hermione Jane Granger, if you ever scare me like that again, I swear on the heavens and hell and everything in between, I will follow you into the afterlife and beat you senseless with a copy of Hogwarts: A History!"

Everyone visibly relaxed and Hermione gave Harry a sheepish grin though she tried really hard to look annoyed but failed.

The laughter soon died out and Dumbledore cleared his throat and spoke to Harry, "Harry, I think we need to talk."

'Speak up boy, defy him, take him down a peg or two.' Came Chaos' not-so-subtle hint.

"I'm afraid I can't do that sir." Harry replied calmly, picking Hermione up much against her protests and to Ron and Ginny's chagrin. He carried her over to the couch and sat down with her on his lap. He gently stroked her hair and she looked at him with extreme confusion.

Dumbledore was simply dumbstruck. Never before had anyone ever said 'no' to him. To have his 'meek' and 'malleable' weapon do so was simply preposterous and non-negotiable.

"I insist Harry."

Everyone visibly tensed, they knew this was an order, however, Harry remained (or at least pretended to remain) completely oblivious.

"I too must insist sir. As much as I would like to chat with you about the new prophecy, I find myself drawn to Hermione's care. You must wait sir, it is only polite."

Hermione visibly paled, "Harry don't be silly, you must speak with Professor Dumbledore right this instant! I'll be fine."

"If you're sure 'Mione?"

"I'm perfectly fine, go!" She literally kicked him off the couch and settled down, eyeing him warily, while internally she was wondering what the hell he was doing, why was he doing this, when the HELL did she allow him to call her 'Mione' and a whole bunch of things.

That's when he did something that made Hermione forget everything about her musings. Harry bent down and faced her, his lips as close to hers as before. Hermione's heart was beating wildly and erratically. When the hell did Harry start affecting her like this? He slowly and carefully ran a hand through her hair and came forward.

Hermione visibly stiffened and there was a sharp intake of breath from everyone in the room. Harry leaned into her lips with his own. He gently brushed them and went towards her ear before she even registered the highly sensual and brief touch.

"You look so sexy when you're hyperventilating about me." He whispered in her ear and before she even knew what the hell was going on as she was trying to sort the muddled thoughts of her head that were even more muddled now because of his words. Harry gently licked her earlobe and back away.

The entire action from when he bent down may have lasted barely fifteen seconds but to Hermione, they were the by all and end all of the world. She stared at him wild-eyed and as he turned with a satisfied smirk on his face, she unconsciously traced the still present wetness of his tongue on her ear. She shuddered lightly thinking about the naughty thing he told her and to be honest she had no idea how to respond.

She abruptly came out of her dream world when Ron came surging up to her and demanded an explanation. She was only half-listening to him and nodded when she thought he was expecting an answer from her.

Ron was even more furious and his ears turned redder if possible.

"A simple nod is not answer Hermione! What is up between you two? I want to know now!"

She stared at Ron finally registering his words.

"HOW DARE YOU RONALD BILIUS WEASLEY? I-"

The argument that followed that statement was remembered in the Weasley family and by the scattered Order members for years to come. Never had they heard such gusto and anger-filled verbal assaults as the 'brightest witch of her age' made even Fred and George blush with some of her choice words that seemed to have been invented by her.

Ronald was utterly shocked and completely unprepared for the onslaught of verbal abuse, even Mrs. Weasley was too startled to reprimand the normally so well kempt Hermione.

Hermione was revelling in the abuse she gave as she was able to vent the anger and frustration of being trapped in Grimmauld Place, Harry, the dirt of the house, Harry, the tension of OWLs, Harry,

Voldemort's hatred for muggleborns, Harry... There's a pretty obvious pattern here.

Meanwhile Harry and Dumbledore made their way into the room and Dumbledore heavily warded it with several silencing, imperturbable and notice-me-not charms. He turned towards Harry and spoke clearly,

"Harry, I had no idea you were a Seer."

"Neither did I, especially since I've failed Divination since I started the class. By the way, since I am a Seer, I guess the whole point of Divination is lost as I've got the art under control. Mind if I add Arithmancy and Ancient Runes instead. Should be interesting." Harry continued rambling about various school-related things and Dumbledore began to lose his patience.

"Yes Harry, I will speak to Professor McGonagall about your desire for change of subjects but to more important details, I think it is essential we bind your ability."

Harry considered the Headmaster's words for a few moments, "No sir, I'm sorry, I don't see how that helps at all."

Dumbledore smiled knowingly having cooked up the perfect grandfatherly answer, "The future is a powerful and terrible gift to control young Harry, you have far too many other things to worry about."

Harry pretended to consider his words again and replied, "Sorry Headmaster I disagree with you. Especially since you don't have the Sight, you wouldn't know anything about how it works or doesn't."

Dumbledore was annoyed, the boy actually slandered him, be it an indirect and honest observation, Dumbledore could not overlook the critique.

"Be that as it may Harry, it is yet to be determined whether you are a true Seer or not, the prophecy you made could very well be disproven." Dumbledore was expecting the repenting weapon to come back to his power now but was surprised again by Harry's pensive look.

'If you refuse again, he will use force'. Came Chaos' warning.

Harry's eyebrows rose in alarm and he stared at the Headmaster with undisguised fury and disgust.

"You wouldn't Headmaster, I'd think that would be stooping too low even for you."

Dumbledore was baffled, "Excuse me Harry?"

"Just because I refused your request, you are going to bind my powers forcefully. I'm shocked and disgusted with you Headmaster." Harry countered with venom.

Dumbledore was floored, the boy knew!

"Harry I would never do that to you."

"I don't trust you."

Now Dumbledore was speechless.

"How-how can you believe your visions so much that you do not even believe me, Harry? Surely you see the error in your ways?" Dumbledore hoped against hope that this would work.

"I believe my visions as much as I believe that I was born as the seventh month died." Dumbledore visibly paled and Harry internally smirked, this was more fun than he realized, "After all, this may very well be the 'power the Dark Lord knows not'".

Dumbledore fell onto the nearby chair dejectedly. 'He knows! He knows!'

"So you know the contents of the prophecy Mr. Potter." It wasn't a question.

"Yes, I do and by the way, my name is Evans-Potter."

At the mention of Evans before Potter, Dumbledore looked sick and stared at Harry as if he were the cause of his sickness. Harry for one had no idea why Dumbledore was so taken by his full surname and was doubly convinced to go to Gringotts and figure it out.

"I see you know more than I had ever let you know, Mr. Evans-Potter."

"Frankly Headmaster, I am quite disgusted with you and your idea of 'protection', but that's for the next Order meeting to discuss." Dumbledore looked at him and before he could say Harry wasn't allowed, Harry countered, "You may as well allow me Headmaster, after all, it is me and Voldemort in the end and keeping me in the dark isn't going to help our cause."

Dumbledore seemed to age fifty years in mere minutes and Harry was having a Hawaiian beach party with fifty bikini-clad Hermiones in his head at the sight of him.

"Very well Mr. Evans-Potter, as you wish." Dumbledore rose and undid the wards so that they could leave.

"I trust you will not divulge these secrets to your companions."

"Not to those whom I don't trust."

"And who might that be?"

"The Weasleys."

Again Dumbledore was speechless, Harry seemed to be doing that a lot this evening.

"But they've cared for you and raised you as their own Harry, surely you don't mean this?"

"Ron was with me because he wanted to share my unwanted limelight, Ginny is disturbingly in love with the Boy-Who-Lived and Molly wants a famous son-in-law to bring them out of poverty. Oh and you promised Molly I would marry Ginny, which by the way, you had no right to do and I will definitely not agree to."

Dumbledore stared at him open-mouthed. 'How does he know everything? Where did this infernal Sight come from?'

"So you see Headmaster, I do distrust you and I should warn you, the Manipulator will fall." With that Harry walked up to the doors and

opened them but stopped and turned one last time, "Oh and before you decide to 'promise' Ron the prefect badge that should be mine because you think I have enough to handle, I'd ask you to reconsider. After all, you wouldn't want an unco-operative Chosen One on your side now would you? Good night Headmaster."

Harry left beating a victory drum in his head with ten dancing Hermiones doing cartwheels around him.

Dumbledore sat down again and had one of his lemon drops with only one thought resonating in his head, 'I'm fucked!'

Loved it, hated it, adored it to death? REVIEW PLEASE and LET ME KNOW!

Also the next scene is going to involve some smut so if you're not into that beware...

Seriously though, I'm hungry for reviews,

Kisses,

~ Gatonio.

CHAPTER 4

The Change of Tides

The next few weeks passed in a blur, Harry spent most of his time with Sirius, trying to make up for lost time. If not with Sirius, he was in Hermione's company and much to the annoyance of three redheads; he was always 'close' to her.

Hermione was getting more and more baffled with this new Harry Potter. He took care of her, opened doors for her and made her giggle like a girl with his gentlemanly actions. But then again, he asserted a massive torrent of sexual tension over her with the slightest of his touches. Whenever Hermione thought she was finally calming down around him, he'd place a loose strand of hair behind her ear or sweetly kiss her hand or maybe even place his hand around her waist and hold her close. She was so attuned to being in his embrace these past few weeks that anytime she didn't hear his calm and reassuring heartbeat was fraught with peril and doubts.

As much as Hermione Granger, the 'brightest witch of her age' wanted to deny it, she was falling in love with her best friend.

Yet Harry's newfound maturity was astounding to her. He actually wanted to study and finish his homework and this effectively made Ron give them a wide berth.

Flashback

Harry walked up to Hermione as Ron was trying (quite pathetically) to 'woo' her and to make her think something was wrong with Harry. Hermione was barely listening to him that seemed to be her general state of mind these days; she only listened when her Harry spoke to her.

'When the hell did he become my Harry?' she thought amiably.

Harry quietly wrapped his arms around her waist and Hermione involuntarily jumped but he didn't let her go. Ron looked livid and turned a terrible shade of red.

"Heya Harry." He said through clenched teeth.

Harry purposely buried his head in Hermione's hair and said quietly, "Hey Ron. 'Mione."

Hermione smiled at her nickname and decided to respond in an intelligent fashion that would effectively reprimand Harry from ever creeping on her from behind again. That's when Harry gave her his devastatingly handsome, boyish smile and Hermione was drowned in his melting green eyes.

"Hi." Was her response.

"I was wondering 'Mione, I think we should start with OWL review and preparation. After all these exams are extremely important."

To say that Hermione was shocked was definitely the understatement of the century. Ron was maybe in second place behind her in that department.

"You want to WHAT?" Came Ron's question.

"I'm assuming your ears work fine Ron, you heard me. Also 'Mione." He said avoiding Ron and his angry expression and solely concentrating on her, "I got a letter from Professor McGonagall today, I asked her if I could drop Divination and take Ancient Runes and Arithmancy. I've studied the basics over summer but I need your help to catch up if I want to be prepared in time for OWLs."

"WHAT!" Now Hermione found herself, "You cannot, I repeat CANNOT expect me to help you catch up with TWO YEARS worth of matter in TWO extremely difficult classes."

She was shaking her head and Harry pouted cutely that Hermione could just not resist.

"Oh come off it 'Mione, if anyone can prep me in time, its you as you are the best teacher," he leaned in closer to her ear and whispered only for her to hear, "and the sexiest."

Hermione 'eeped' again and couldn't help herself from giggling. Ron marched off muttering the words 'traitor' 'book-worm' and 'off his rocker'.

"What's wrong with him?" Harry asked nonchalantly.

Hermione wanted to answer him and tell him that his odd and unusual behaviour has gotten a lot of people surprised but couldn't do so as Harry gently kissed her forehead letting his lips linger there for a just a moment longer than necessary.

"Tell me when you have the schedule you are undoubtedly going to prepare, ready." He placed a hand over his heart and continued, "I swear I will follow it to the letter or else incur the wrath of Lady Hermione Granger, torture expert extraordinaire."

He smiled impishly and Hermione squatted his arm in mock annoyance.

"Alright alright, I'll help but it won't be easy, so no slacking off."

Harry saluted to her and said, "Ma'am, yes ma'am." And broke into the most beautiful smile that Hermione had ever seen.

'This is going to be interesting!' She thought absently.

End Flashback

And interesting it was. Over the past four weeks, Harry had not only studied all the matter for the entire fourth and fifth year of Ancient Runes and Arithmancy, but had mastered it too. If she dared admit it, he was probably better than her!

Harry was trying very hard to stick with Hermione's schedule and he had a double incentive to follow it: one he would be able to join her all the time in classes when in school and secondly and more importantly, she was so busy tutoring him, she barely gave any of the Weasleys a second thought.

Harry was also spending a lot of time with Chaos as the two of them were deciding and deliberating who they could trust; well, Harry was deliberating, Chaos was laughing as she already knew and she could tell him but was having too much fun watching him torment himself in wonder.

By the time Harry's birthday came along on July 31st, Chaos had gifted him several more abilities, as she perceived Fate and Destiny attempt to screw things for him in the future. Harry could detect

potions and their effects, he could detect auras based on magical signature and emotional intent, he could even do a little wandless magic. Chaos still hadn't decided on his animagus form, or she had decided but was being too stubborn to tell him what it was.

Harry asked Hermione if they would be able to finish their initial review for all their classes by the 30th of July as he wanted to spend the last month of holidays doing special review for NEWT-level matter. Needless to say Hermione was ecstatic, after all 'this meant a trip to the bookstore for more books'.

Over the past month, Harry realized that Ginny was not following her 'I'm-cool-with-you-being-the-Boy-Who-Lived' routine like last time. Instead she spent all her time and energy trying to convince him that everyone, especially Hermione was against him and that she would stand by him no matter what or who called him deranged and crazy. That part Harry could deal with but what he could not deal with was Ginny throwing herself at him in private at every moment she got.

Flashback

"Ron, Hermione please go and call everyone for dinner. Harry, Ginny continue cleaning and come down for dinner in about twenty minutes. Remember to wash your hands." Came Molly's stern commands.

Harry groaned internally, he was seriously getting tired of Molly's attempts to get him close to Ginny and Hermione to Ron.

As everyone dispersed, Ginny deposited herself on the dusty couch and gave an uncharacteristically loud sigh.

"I'm knackered. Come on Harry, let's take a break, Mom will never realize anyway."

Harry reluctantly sat down as he wondered what new seductive torture she had decided to reign on him today.

Ginny casually raised herself from the couch to make room for Harry, though it was big enough for three people anyway. As Harry was about to sit down, Ginny 'accidentally' fell onto his lap with a very fake, 'oops'.

Harry was screaming internally, 'leave me alone Ginny!' he thought.

"Sorry Harry, guess I'm a klutz, Tonks must be rubbing off on me." While she explained herself, she didn't once try to get off his lap, instead she started forcing her bottom onto her his lap with a disturbing amount of force.

"Ginny, I'm sorry you have become a klutz. Get off me now." As Harry rose Ginny toppled off his lap but took it in her stride and prevented herself from falling gracefully.

Honestly, becoming a klutz like Tonks, how stupid did she think Harry to be?

She fell backwards on his standing posture and once again rammed her behind onto his lap. Harry rolled his eyes and walked away from her.

"I think I'm going to read something with Hermione. She always finds new things to put into me."

"Oh but Harry you can put things into me anytime and anywhere." Came Ginny's seductive reply.

Harry internally gagged. This was getting disgusting.

"Sure Ginny, whatever."

With that he bounded away from her only to be soon joined by Hermione who seemed to be as frustrated as he was. The sight of her calmed him down and he engulfed her in a hug.

They both chuckled and walked down to the kitchen together, not even realizing, they were holding hands.

End Flashback

Molly Weasley had surprised him with her trickery. Every meal Harry sat with Hermione getting disapproving gazes from three distinct people, which Hermione was oblivious to as she was mumbling about some potion or another. He sat beside her not only out of choice (because who else would he like to sit with?) but also for her protection. Every meal they ate was tainted with some of the

strongest amortentia potions Harry had ever seen. The doses were only rising with time and he was getting tired of 'cleaning' Hermione and his meals every day, thus ending the effect of the amortentia and getting confused and agitated looks from the redheads.

The friendship between Hermione and Ron had officially ended after Ron's nasty outburst of how Hermione 'belonged' to him. Harry wanted to knock his teeth out when Hermione told him what happened but he was rest assured, Ron would never get the 'wrong impression' ever again.

Flashback

Hermione was reading silently in Black Library. Harry had been spending some time with Sirius like he did everyday at that time. Usually Remus joined them and loud sounds of laughter could be heard coming from the rooms they were in.

She was so engrossed reading about Potions while worrying about Harry's ultimatum of finishing OWL review by his birthday that she didn't even notice Ron come and sit near her.

"What are you doing Hermy?" He asked innocently, sitting down in front of her and startling her from her reading.

"RON! You gave me a fright! Don't do that again!" And she squatted him lightly, "and what's with this 'Hermy'? I have a name, use it, the nickname is horrendous!"

"Oh and Harry can call you 'Mione and get away with it but I can't name you Hermy?" Ron countered.

He had Hermione there, normally, no one was allowed to give her nicknames, she absolutely despised them. But with Harry she made an exception. But with Ron and certainly not with Hermy!

"At least he gave me a decent nickname, not 'Hermy'!" Hermione replied venomously.

Ron only smiled, undeterred and his expression turned sombre, "I'm worried about you 'Mione."

She internally cringed hearing him call her 'Mione. Only from Harry did it sound right. But she very well couldn't tell Ron that so she gulped down her discomfort. She looked at him and considered his words, "Why oh pray tell me Lord Worrisome Weasley?" she asked sarcastically.

Ron didn't seem to catch on to her tone, "Its because of Harry, he seems to be always trying to touch you. I don't know what his intentions are, after all, you can never be too sure. I think you should stop reviewing with him and spend more time with Gin and me, we'll keep you safe."

"Tosh! Absolute bollocks! Ron do you honestly consider me that stupid? I agree I'm unaware of the nature of Harry's feelings towards me, but I'm not so oblivious about you. I know you've liked me for a very long time and I thought I did too. But now... things change Ron and you only decided to pursue me after Harry showed an interest in me. I... I think I like him Ron; I'm falling for Harry, badly. In the light of that, I don't think I could ever wrong you by being with you while my heart was with him." She concluded her rant with a sorrowful look in her eyes, "I'm really, truly sorry Ron but I just don't feel about you the same way."

Ron stood up as soon as she finished. "Sorry-doesn't-cut-it!" he said through gritted teeth.

"You are mine! You were promised to me! You belong to me! NOT HARRY!" He spat at her angrily.

Hermione was on her feet too, her temper flying all over the place, "I am NOT your property that you can OWN me Ronald!"

Ron approached her menacingly and before she could react, his hands were on her breasts and he was pulling her close for a kiss.

Hermione screamed loudly hoping someone would hear her, hoping Harry would hear her. That's when she remembered Sirius silenced the room from the inside and outside as he got tired listening to Hermione complain about noise as she read in the Library. She was doomed!

A memory surfaced in Hermione's mind, she was in the midst of Devil's Snare and someone said something to her, "Are you a witch or not?" came the voice of a younger Harry.

Hermione whipped out her wand but quickly stopped herself; she couldn't perform magic because of the age restriction. She did the next best thing. She angrily thrust her wand at Ron's 'sensitive' region.

Ron yelped in pain and collapsed onto the floor in an unceremonious heap, his hands covering his 'delicates' from further onslaught. Hermione was relieved; ironically she thought it was funny that he came to promise her protection from acts like the one he himself attempted on her. In a bout of anger, Hermione jabbed the small heel of her shoe right between Ron's fingers and onto the 'delicates'.

The now screaming Ron reminded her of Moaning Myrtle for some reason.

"If you ever touch me again, I will personally cut out your penis with a needle and stick it in the place where the sun never shines!" She spat angrily.

She quickly gathered herself and walked out of the room.

Hermione didn't tell anyone about what happened (except Harry), her reasoning, 'Mrs. Weasley will most definitely carry out the threat that I gave him, of course only after Fred, George and Mr. Weasley are done with him.'

Harry chuckled when she told her his threat but didn't forget the incident. Ron escaped his uncomfortable questions saying he fell while walking in a very uncomfortable position, however, that was after he spent about an hour lying on the ground, clutching his 'delicates'.

End Flashback

Yes things were finally looking up and Harry was making headway with his people-to-be-trusted list.

As Harry deliberated with Chaos in the orb, he had divided the list into three categories:

Trust: Hermione, Remus, Sirius

Don't trust: Ginny, Ron, Molly, Dumbledore

Unsure: Fred, George, Arthur, Bill, Charlie, Moody and Tonks.

Yet Harry was happy much to Hermione's exuberance and his own satisfaction, they had finished all their OWL review by the 30th. Now they were free to pursue new studies.

Harry contemplated the past month of miracles and realized how much he had already changed. Ron and Ginny were no longer part of his life (or at least not as significantly as before), Dumbledore had not showed his face and not a single Order meeting was conducted in Grimmauld Place. Harry suspected that Dumbledore was purposefully avoiding meetings as Harry would attend whether Dumbledore liked it or not.

Yet he was happy because tomorrow he would be fifteen, again! He had a few special plans for Hermione and himself and was itching till the birthday party he knew was coming would end.

When Harry was led down the stairs by an ecstatic pair of twins, he put on his best show of surprise as he saw the party. He blew the candles of the giant snitch-looking cake and presents ensued. Ron gave him a 'Chudley Cannons' tee-shirt, the twins got him some new products and Harry was itching to test them on Ron. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley bought him an enchanted diary (not like Riddle's though, this one simply locked and would only open for Harry), though Harry didn't trust the diary all too much. Dumbledore sent him his 'best wishes' (Harry snorted at this!). Sirius and Remus were the biggest surprise as they got him Sirius' old flying motorbike. Harry was dying to try it out but Mrs. Weasley's and Hermione's protests put a stop to it. Ginny got him a locket with a stag in a heart on it. Inside was a picture of herself 'so that she was always close to him'. Harry subtly deactivated the compulsion charms on the locket and allowed Ginny to put it on him. He then (much to her surprise and chagrin) went straight to Hermione and pulled her hands into his.

Hermione blushed brilliantly and handed him her present, looking intently at the wall the whole time. Harry opened it and groaned internally but managed to keep the smile plastered his face.

Inside the package was an all-too-familiar Study Manager, the very same one in fact that she bought for Harry and Ron during Christmas in the previous timeline.

Hermione was chewing her lip nervously, expecting him to hate her present and in turn hate her for it. Seeing his smile, she was relieved beyond measure. The truth was that Hermione was planning on giving him something else for his birthday, something that couldn't be packaged, but she chickened out at the last moment and gave him the only thing she could get her hands on at such short notice.

She smiled looking embarrassed. "I know its not the ideal present but its dead useful." Hermione knew she was speaking the truth after all she had bought it for herself for the very same reason.

Harry pulled her close to him by the waist and whispered seductively in her ear, "I love it." He then let her go as her breathing hitched and was caught in her throat.

'Stupid, stupid, stupid Hermione! You should have just kissed him when you had the chance!' She thought sadly.

The party soon died down and everyone headed for bed. Harry headed for his and Ron's room. Once an hour had passed since they got into bed, Harry cast a strong sleeping charm on Ron to make sure he slept soundly till morning. Next, he walked to Hermione's and Ginny's room.

'What the hell are you doing Harry! You're being a freaking creeper! You're no better than Ron!' He stopped himself at the door and was about to turn around when he heard Chaos again.

"Fate is meddling with you child, she is using her finest gift against you: guilt! You must not yield, go to her!"

Harry was startled to hear Chaos at such a time but shrugged and told her in his head he couldn't do that, Fate conspiring or not.

"Fine!" She huffed angrily, "You leave me no choice Evans-Potter!"

With that, Harry once again lost all control of his faculties and lunged silently into the room. His mind was screaming against his doing this but his magic flared and cast a similar sleeping charm on Ginny as well.

Harry regained control of himself and was seething. He was about to give Chaos a piece of his mind but was abruptly stopped on seeing the sleeping form of Hermione rise up tentatively and point her wand at him.

"I swear Ron if its you again, I will carry out that threat."

Harry was surprised she thought it was Ron but didn't mind in the least. "It's me 'Mione."

She lowered her wand and said calmly, "What are you doing in my room Harry?"

'What was he doing in her room?' He didn't have an answer!

She calmly stared at him waiting for a reply and Harry was fumbling like a fish in his head.

Chaos spoke up using his voice, "For some odd reason I felt you didn't initially plan on giving me an Exam Planner for my birthday. Although I admit it was a thoughtful gift nonetheless, it just isn't your style 'Mione. So I thought I might come and ask you for my real gift. After all, its still my birthday for another hour."

Harry quirked his eyebrows with surprise, what would he do without Chaos bailing him out? It's a wonder he survived the first time round.

"I ask myself the same question every time I intervene honey." Came Chaos' voice in his head.

Meanwhile Hermione was fumbling under his watchful, yet somewhat distracted gaze. Had she herself not been so worried about his (or Chaos') words, she would've caught on it immediately.

"Harry! Ginny might wake up! You have to leave now!" Hermione hissed.

"Don't worry, I placed a wandless sleeping charm on her, she won't be getting up till tomorrow, neither will Ron."

Hermione forgot her discomfort and cocked her eyebrow in wonder, "Wandless magic Harry! That's very advanced, nearly a lost art. Merlin, how did you achieve it?"

Harry kicked himself internally for his slip-up but once again Chaos intervened on his behalf and spoke up, "No idea 'Mione, just manifested like my Sight. Couldn't control it."

Hermione looked like she wanted to ask more questions but Harry's seemingly honest answer left her knowing he knew no more than her.

"So, what did you plan to give me before 'Mione"? Harry went on as if they weren't interrupted in the slightest. He inched his way closer to her bed and ultimately sat down while Hermione looked everywhere but at him in nervousness.

"I... I..." Hermione stuttered.

Harry huffed in irritation.

"Honestly Hermione, have I not made my intentions quite clear? I tried to give you space so that you didn't feel pressured into liking me, but I thought we were on the same page by now. I thought you'd be willing to say it to me today. Guess I was wrong or you chickened out."

Hermione stared at him in disbelief, her eyes not wavering from his face that currently wore an expression of sadness.

"If you're not interested in me, I understand Hermione. I mean we can still be fri-" The rest of his statement was cut off as Hermione lunged onto him and pushed his back on the bed as she was on top. Her lips were desperately holding onto his and moulding around him. Harry was startled for a few seconds but quickly responded.

'Ahhh... Strawberries...' was the only coherent thought in Harry's mind as their lips brushed against one another and still held on as if for dear life.

Both had thought that their first kiss would be gentle; it would be like a small wisp of breeze, gone before it was even felt. Yet this desperate and needy kiss they shared was better, much, much better.

Harry pushed Hermione over and was on top of her, never letting his lips leave hers. He traced the bottom of her lip with his tongue seeking entrance.

Hermione gasped but before she knew what she was doing, her mouth opened in acceptance and Harry's tongue gently prodded and explored her mouth.

The two teens savagely ravaged each other's mouths till they were forced to stop for the need of air. Seconds later, Hermione's tongue licked Harry's puffed lips for round two. Harry merely chuckled and responded enthusiastically. Their tongues danced for dominance and later seemed to mingle with such affection and love that they simply lost themselves in each other.

Now Harry was after all, a teenage boy, even when he died. He didn't have as much self control over himself as he would like. Hermione felt Harry press against her and she silently smiled into his mouth. Harry, realizing his predicament was found out, stopped kissing her in embarrassment and tried to untangle himself. She simply pushed him back down with a glare and soundly kissed him on his lips.

"Its alright Harry," she said breathlessly, "if I do say so myself, I feel a bit honoured."

Harry smiled at her and kissed her gently, which she enjoyed thoroughly.

"So Miss Granger, to surmise the past hour, would you do me the honour of being my girlfriend?"

Hermione made an uncharacteristic squeal of happiness and renewed kissing his lips punctuated by the word "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes..."

Somewhere around midnight when Hermione was utterly exhausted from kissing Harry, she laid down on her back and Harry reached

over to her and was facing her, his shirt was 'mysteriously' taken off sometime during the last half hour.

"What's wrong love?" He asked his girlfriend and smiled at the thought of 'girlfriend'.

Hermione smiled too, she liked being called 'love'. She seductively wound her arms around Harry's waist and pulled him down on top of her.

"Nothing love, just thinking how lucky I am that I got you."

"Well for being the brightest witch of the age, you really can be dull sometimes. The only person lucky here, is me." He said pointing to himself and Hermione's smile if possible grew wider. She giggled again and pulled Harry down for a gentle kiss.

Though Harry wasn't done. He slowly kissed Hermione's jawline and her chin, lingering in each kiss long enough for Hermione to sigh oh-so-seductively.

He proceeded down to her neck and did something Ginny often called a 'love-bite' in his previous timeline. He sucked on Hermione neck, making her gasp in surprise but that didn't even deter him. He continued to suckle, till he was satisfied and Hermione grew still with apprehension and lust in his arms.

From her neck, Harry descended to her flimsy nightgown. He rubbed his nose in the valley of her chest over the nightgown and Hermione gently clutched his hair, her breathing erratic.

Harry looked up at her, silently asking for permission and Hermione once again agreed without thinking.

Harry smiled his boyish smile, effectively ending any coherent thought in Hermione's mind and gently pulled down her nightgown till her waist.

There in the moonlight were exposed Hermione's gorgeous breasts. Harry gently traced them with his finger, all the time going round her nipples but never touching them. Hermione grew agitated yearning for his touch but didn't utter a word, fearful she might end the magic and wake up from her dream.

Gently and oh-so-slowly, Harry descended on his Hermione's left nipple and ran his tongue along it.

Hermione moaned at finally gaining contact and forced his head down for more. Harry began his ministrations of slowly sucking and licking Hermione's nipples while his hand tweaked the other nipple between his thumb and forefinger. Hermione squirmed under him and was barely able to breathe, much less stay awake.

She started whispering Harry's name into the darkness with the utmost passion, "Harry, Harry, Harry."

After a few more minutes, Harry raised himself from Hermione's lovely breasts and kissed her soundly. His own naked chest touching hers in the process.

"I love you 'Mione." He whispered.

"I love you too, Harry." Said Hermione contentedly.

The two teens then fell into a restful sleep, with plans for the future laid for them holding nothing but love and more love.

Little did Harry know that Chaos' infamous sisters were enraged that he did what he did and things were about to get a whole lot worse.

WELL...? Too soon? Good? Well done? Not-so-well done?

Okay, so someone told me they would appreciate more length in chapters so I delayed this chapter to add some more onto it. I hope you like it, it is the product of diligent 'note-taking' during English class.

To clarify a few things: NO, this is NOT a SuperHarry story (though I do like those!). Its just that since the enemies have risen in power, Harry must rise too. Furthermore, the reasons for the 'Weasley betrayal' are actually a little more twisted than your usual Weasley-bashing stories. The reasons will of course come out soon enough (maybe a chapter or two later...)

I've also created an elaborate story for Dumbledore's betrayal (i.e. its not your usual 'he's a gloryhound' or 'he's twisted by his idea of 'greater good' though, those reasons do play into the main one...)

I admit I laboured over exactly how I wanted this to happen, Harry and Hermione officially getting together had to be special... But doing 'it' on the first night would be a bit too much so I thought I'd rather make it more realistic.

Do REVIEW as I'm particularly interested in hearing what you thought of this chapter...

Kisses,

~ Gatonio

Chapter 4

Here I am...

"!"

Hearing the piercing cry of a girl Harry immediately got up and out of bed. He had his wand in hand and was pointing it, ready to incapacitate. Wartime had left him with an unending need for CONSTANT VIGILANCE. Moody would be so proud!

Ginny covered her mouth with her hand and pointed to Harry in an accusatory manner.

"What? What is it Ginny? Did someone attack you?" Harry was in full battle mode.

"Yes, I have been attacked, my soul has been destroyed! Seeing you with her in bed, TOGETHER! How could you Harry, how could you?" Ginny started crying hysterically, moaning the loss of her loved one to the bushy slag.

Hermione had gotten up during the exchange and while fumbling to cover her naked breasts she contemplated Ginny's words. Needless to say, they were completely illogical to the logical mind of Hermione Granger.

Loud drumming could be heard from the outside.

"Oh joy! Just how I wanted my perfect morning to be." Harry muttered darkly.

Hermione glared at him but he didn't notice, he was focusing on the doorway.

Three, two, one...

The Weasley matriarch came rambling in with her wand pointed. The sight that greeted her was what she least expected: a bare-chested Harry Potter standing in front of the bed of a dishevelled but oddly glowing Hermione Granger and the loud moans and sobs of her dear, sweet Ginny. Molly didn't exactly need to be a logic specialist to put two and two together in this situation.

'Harry slept with the mudblood! She was meant for Ron! How could Harry do this to her poor Ginny?' Were the thoughts circling in Molly's mind as she rounded on an indifferent Harry while comforting a weeping Ginny.

"How could you do this Harry?" Molly finally snapped at him angrily.

Seeing that the silent, angry staring match was finally over, Harry broke his indifferent stupor and answered lightly, "That seems to be the catch-phrase of the day. Although I am highly curious, what could I have possibly done to invoke such strong reactions?"

Molly ground her teeth in pure rage, "You left my poor Ginny! She was meant for you, she was..." Molly abruptly stopped her rant as Harry started barking in laughter. Needless to say that the two loud redheads and one silent brunette were more than a little disturbed.

"Sorry Mrs. Weasley but there never was anything between Ginny and I. In fact I only ever spoke to her last year, before that and even now, she's just Ron's little sister to me." Ginny sobbed louder and Harry mentally debated as to make the next comment or not.

'Go on child, it may be crude but they deserve it. Also this should effectively stab any 'romantic' feelings Ginevra deludes herself into believing that you have for her.' Chaos always spoke at the most opportune moments.

Harry decided to continue heeding her advice like he always does (not that she gives him a choice to disregard it in any case...), "After all, whenever I look at Ginny, I see the shadow of the little sister I never had. I always dreamt that if I had a little sister she would look exactly like Ginny, except without ugly freckles and of course, straighter hair, but the same red as my mother, just like Ginny."

Harry's words caused Ginny to completely break down. She sobbed and moaned and wept and Harry almost felt sorry for her and his harsh statement. Almost.

He looked away to see Molly Weasley forcing Hermione out of the room. As soon as she touched Hermione's hand Harry rounded on her, all light sarcasm and humour forgotten.

"TOUCH HER MOLLY AND YOU WILL DIE!" Molly immediately stopped trying to grab a hold of Hermione and Hermione skirted her way across the bed and stood up, behind Harry.

Hermione could see through the various tense muscles on Harry's back that he was not in a pleasing mood. She did what she thought would calm him down best, she wrapped her arms around his torso and hugged herself close to him. Harry shuddered lightly but instantly calmed down.

Molly saw the silent exchange with dread and now a mounting sense of horror. Initially, she thought that Harry was showing an interest in the mudblood know-it-all just for a round in the sack, but this one physical gesture was enough to tell her that she was wrong in her logic.

She came up with a new plan of action. With a Herculean effort, she bit back her temper and said as calmly as she could manage, "I was simply surprised Harry, after all, it is not appropriate to sleep in the girls' room. I'm sure Ginny is simply crying over the joy of hearing about your strong brotherly feelings for her. After all, you can never have too many brothers."

Hearing her mother 'condemn' (this is of course a condemnation for Ginny) her by deeming Harry her brother Ginny cried harder.

Harry quirked his eyebrow questioningly and wondered what the hell she had come up with.

'Oh I love how Fate tried to bring things into her realm.' Chaos came forth with her wisdom, 'be weary young warrior, she attempts to sidetrack you to lull you into a false sense of security. She wished you to feel secure so she can convince you to be adopted by them and thus, usurp your title legally.'

'Title what title?' Harry's inquisition took over.

'You'd have found out had you heeded Bob's advice and gone to speak to the Goblins, now wouldn't you?'

'Alright, alright Ms. Queen of Sarcasm. I'm going today anyway, I asked Remus last night during the party.'

'Hmpf. I see you are not completely useless.'

Chaos' consciousness withdrew from his mind and Harry realized he had basically been staring intensely at Mrs. Weasley for about two minutes.

"Harry, are you feeling alright?" Hermione spoke for the first time that day and her arms tightened around him. Harry smiled at her and looked back at Mrs. Weasley's confused look.

"I understand and appreciate your words Mrs. Weasley. Your family has shown me a lot of kindness and I hope to repay it someday." Harry internally smirked at the winning grin Mrs. Weasley gave him; he could literally see her eyes morph into dollar signs.

"That's quite alright Harry. I'll just be taking Ginny now." With that she gathered the still weeping redhead in her arms and left Hermione and him alone to their own devices.

'Wow, she must really be pleased to not even tell me to get out of the girls' room while being half-undressed I might add.' Harry thought amiably.

"Harry..." Came a soft, tentative voice from behind him and Harry was happily turning around to attend to it.

He was stopped mid turn by two gentle hands on his thighs keeping him rooted to his position.

Now Harry was confused.

"Love, is something the matter? I'll happily try and explain Ginny and Mrs Weasley's odd behaviour if you want."

"No..." Another vague, faint reply, "I wanted to ask about something else and you have to answer that."

Now Harry was beyond confused and truly baffled.

"Of course sweetheart, anything."

"Why," she stopped herself and took a calming breath before continuing, "why do you have so many... marks on your back?"

Harry literally wanted to kick himself and stick his foot into the place where the sun never shines.

'How could I have let this happen? This is not how our first morning was supposed to be like.' Harry didn't know what to do.

'Oy peabrain! If it hadn't been for all the chaos and distortion I am causing in the timeline, there would never have been a 'first morning' with Hermione. Now do yourself a favour and just tell her the truth of your past with the Dursleys. The whole truth and don't leave anything out.'

Harry was seething, 'how dare you manipulate this into happening? You knew this is how it would end and you led to it! How are you better than Dumbledore or your sisters? Manipulative as ever!'

'First of all you twat, this is how a relationship begins not end: the truth about each other. Secondly and more importantly, of course I'm being manipulative! That's the whole point of the second time around thing, remember pothead! And there is a world of difference between white-beard and I, he's mortal and I'm not for instance. As for my sisters, you already know how your future is going to turn out if I leave you to their machinations. SO talk to her or I'll do it for you! And keep in mind it was not part of the deal we signed that I had to deal with a temperamental teenager! Grow up for MY sake!'

Harry effectively ended his argument being soundly beaten by Chaos' valid points as usual. There really is no pointing in arguing with a Goddess who's probably given the brightest debaters of history their ability to argue.

'Finally love you're beginning to catch onto my drift...'

Harry wisely decided not to comment on that last note, fearing another scary rant from the Goddess of Chaos. He instead mentally prepared himself for the conversation that was definitely going to be the most awkward one ever, in his life.

Harry turned to meet Hermione's gaze and was shocked to see tears flowing down freely from her eyes.

She sniffed bravely and before he could say anything she spoke, "you've been subjected to this since you were a child, am I right?"

Harry nodded.

"How old were you when you got your first... punishment?" Hermione spat out the word as if something vile.

Harry wanted to say that they didn't need to talk about this, that he didn't want to tell her, but the truth was he needed to tell someone.

He lowered his gaze from hers and said in a soft voice, barely above a whisper, "the first time I got punished was when my uncle locked me under the stairs because I asked whether humans can fly like birds. He said it was a freakish question and I needed to be straightened out for it. I was five."

Hermione stiffened in his embrace and light sobs were emanating from her chest but she held herself firm.

"How... How often?" She barely managed to get the word out without croaking.

Harry was wildly searching for a way out of this question. He was no longer worried about his embarrassment or how the talk might affect him. He was worried about the Dursleys' health now that they had an enraged Hermione Granger on their backs.

"Answer me Harry." She commanded quietly but firmly.

"About once every other week till I was six. Once in primary school and the 'accidental' magic started really acting up, about two or three times a week."

Hermione gave out a loud sob and hugged him. "What did they do to you Harry?"

This he was not prepared to answer, angry Goddess of Chaos on his back or not, "Hermione I don't want to talk about that."

Hermione slowly detached herself from him and Harry really didn't want to let her go but conceded.

She stood near the window overlooking the empty street of Grimmauld. The sun's rays were radiating through and Hermione's morning, extra bushy hair seemed to be sparkling. She had a white blanket wrapped around her chest but her back was bare as she faced away from him.

Harry breath caught in his throat at the sheer beauty of Hermione Granger.

"I didn't think you'd want to talk about that particular aspect Harry and I won't force you. I will stand by you and love you as long as you let me," she stopped to breath in deeply, her cracking voice finally coming under control. "But know this, I can always see the ghost of your tortured past around you Harry, it hinders you and you have a huge responsibility on your shoulders. You are obviously used to caring for yourself and are unused to having someone do that for you, but remember," she turned around and faced him, her eyes shinning brilliantly with tears in the sunshine, "whenever you need... need to... to let go, I'd be honoured to hold your hand while you do so."

With that one statement Harry forgot who he was, where he was, why the world turned, Dumbledore was a lowlife wanker, everything! His eyes, mind, ears, body and soul was focused on one person and one person alone, the girl, no, woman in front of him who had basically offered everything she could to try and ease his pain.

Harry calmly walked forward and forcefully wrapped his arms around Hermione who had managed to compose herself and was as vigiourous and possessive in her embrace as he was with her. Needless to say, Harry was surprised with her forthcoming hold and happily rivalled it with his own. They held each other like that for a few moments before Hermione sniffed and hiccupped in nervousness and looked into his green eyes.

Harry calmly placed his left hand under her chin and dipped his head down to take her lips in his own. After a soft, passionate kiss, Harry steers Hermione back onto the bed and sat down beside her. With a wave of his hand, he closed and locked the door and took a deep breath.

"When I was around two-years old..."

The conversation that followed involved Harry divulging his deepest, darkest secrets to his bushy-haired lover. She listened with rapt attention but often ended up hugging him so tightly while crying for all the pain he'd suffered that Harry nearly choked. The conversation lasted for about two hours. The entire time, Hermione was either holding onto Harry for dear life or simply grasping his hand in support when he spoke of a particularly nasty episode.

Harry himself cried several times in the span of two hours, having truly relived the horror of his past. When he was done he hugged Hermione tightly and she complied equally. It wasn't a lover's embrace nor that of a friend, it was gesture of simple acceptance and promise.

"Thank you Hermione." He sobbed. 'And thank you Chaos.' He added as an afterthought.

'You' re welcome love' Came a soft and kind voice, very unlike the usually feisty Chaos he was used to, 'And thank you for reminding me exactly why my sisters need to be taught a lesson, especially that prudish bitch Destiny.'

Harry chuckled at her words and Hermione looked at him curiously. He simply shook his head and she shrugged and let the matter drop.

Somewhere around noon, when grumbling stomachs got the better of them, the two new lovers, showered, dressed and headed down for lunch. They sat at the table as the Weasley matriarch happily served them all a traditional, delicious Weasley lunch.

Surprisingly Harry didn't find any amortentia potions or anything of the sort in his or Hermione's food. He was surprised and a little worried.

'Chaos, I'm worried about what she's upto.'

'I'm not really sure darling, but it seems fishy. This is definitely Fate's doing, an attempt to get rid of me by restoring order.' She sounded annoyed and disturbingly upbeat about the challenge.

Harry entered a lively discussion about school life with Sirius. His godfather was revelling in his godson's attention and Harry could see the traces of the young man he once was.

Somewhere during their conversation Molly spoke up, "Oh Sirius, I think as Harry's godfather you should know that he has in fact spent the night in Hermione's room with her. They're somewhat of a couple now."

Silence. Dead silence.

Four redheads and Sirius stared at Harry and Hermione questioningly: Ron was his usual angry, the twins were ecstatic and looked like they were biting their tongues to prevent themselves from asking for details and Ginny looked to be on the verge of tears again. Yet the most surprising was Sirius' reaction: he stood up angrily from the table and began yelling at the top of his voice.

"SPENT THE NIGHT IN A GIRL'S ROOM, IN HER BED! HARRY JAMES POTTER, WHAT THE HELL HAVE YOU BEEN UPTO?" Sirius bellowed maniacally.

'Ah!' exclaimed Harry and Chaos simultaneously. Harry silently checked Sirius' food and found it heavily tainted with a strong 'overreaction' potion, along with a draught of rage.

"... WELL WHAT DO HAVE TO SAY FOR YOURSELF?" When Sirius finally ended Harry calmly raised himself from his seat and Chaos subtly supplied him with the best words for his speech.

"Firstly, Mrs. Weasley I must compliment you on your excellent cooking." Molly looked as if all the colour had drained from her freckly face.

"Umm... Th-thank you Harry."

"THE COOKING! THE COOKING..."

"SIRIUS CALM THE FUCK DOWN!" The matched decibels and swear word effectively silenced him.

"Mrs. Weasley saw it fit to taint your food with a 'draught of rage' and an 'overreaction' potion.

"That's preposterous!" Ron immediately spoke up, "I'll kill you for attempting to sully my mother's name!"

Harry raised his wand and Ron looked at him shocked but Harry had no intention of attacking anyone, "I swear on my life and magic that Mrs. Molly Weasley has tainted the food of Sirius Orion Black."

A bright light was emitted from his wand that engulfed him. Hermione yelled loudly but when the light was gone and he stood healthy and strong as before she let out a sigh of relief.

"Obviously I am not lying, although one could suggest that I am so far gone into believing a lie to be true that it is actually true for me. Why not have Mrs. Weasley take an oath of not having tainted the food on her life and magic."

Molly stared at him like a fish out of water. "Of course Mum will swear it and prove you wrong you ingrateful arsehole!"

"The word is ungrateful, 'ingrateful' is not a word Ronald." This was one of Chaos' interjections, apparently bad vocabulary irks her like someone scratching a board with their nails.

"Well Mrs. Weasley go right ahead."

"Yeah Mum, prove him wrong."

Mrs. Weasley just sat there with a defeated expression on her face.

"MOLLY WEASLEY, HOW DARE YOU POISON ME AGAINST MY GODSON IN MY OWN HOUSE! Get out! All of you redheads! OUT!" No one wanted to deal with a pissed off Sirius Black, especially not a potion enhanced pissed off Sirius Black.

One by one the Weasleys went through the fireplace and flood to the Burrow. Each one gave Harry a lasting impression of themselves as they left: Molly called him an 'ingrateful brat' much to Chaos' chagrin before marching away. Ron simply showed him 'the finger' and said that their friendship was over. Ginny gave him a light wave but added in what seemed like a very disturbing afterthought, 'miss me Harry because I'm always thinking about you.' Fred and George apologized for their mother's actions and their brother's impudence and their sister's disturbing sexual advances before leaving themselves with unusually pensive looks on their faces.

Once they were gone Harry breathed a long sigh of relief. He waved his hand and the angry Sirius slumped in his chair and went to sleep.

When faced with Hermione's questioning gaze he added, "he needs to sleep of the potion's effects, it's the easiest way without us having to deal with an overcritical, annoying pest hovering over us."

Hermione grudgingly gave her approval before sitting down herself and contemplating their situation. In the past month Harry had effectively kicked the Weasley's and Dumbledore out of his life, he had wooed her and won her over, he had slowly become a master of any subject her put his mind to, all this after being away for barely a month.

It hit her, something was up, something changed.

"Harry, tell me what are you hiding from me?"

Harry looked at her with an exasperated look. He hoped that if he kept her occupied all the time he wouldn't have to deal with her finally wizing up to all the changes about him.

"Hermione I-"

'Tell her Evans-Potter.'

Harry stopped abruptly and questioned why he was allowed to tell her.

Chaos replied, 'You've seen firsthand today how weak I am when either Fate or Destiny use their plans on me. I am far too unruly to predict such things. Hence, we get along; we're headstrong and think of consequences later. Telling her will give you a strategist and of course, the amount of chaos caused by two people knowing the nature and details of the original timeline is unprecedented. I'm salivating at the thought. TELL HER!'

So Harry sat down and started his second, long talk with Hermione, this one just as brutal and terrible as the previous one. He told her of Voldemort's horcruxes, of how he had already taken the locket and was waiting to get to school to destroy it. He told her of Dumbledore's death and Snape's redemption. He told her of the Hallows and how she had figured out what they meant. He told her

how they all died after the battle of Hogwarts in a bout of his anger. He explained his second chance and his newfound abilities and on Chaos' encouragement, explained his situation and closeness to the eccentric goddess.

At first Hermione refused to believe that Ron, Ginny, Molly and Dumbledore ever did such things but seeing the undeniable evidence in front of them wavered her opinion. Then she began to think Harry had turned into an observant, paranoid lunatic after seeing Cedric die. This one hurt Harry as she was repeating the Daily Prophet. Hermione caught onto her mistake and apologized profusely but still refusing to believe many parts of his story. The lack of faith abruptly ended when Chaos spoke to Hermione personally and convinced her of the reliability of Harry's original life.

Hermione promptly fainted. When she came around she gave Harry the most passionate kiss of his life.

Then she started doing what she did best: drawing plans and scheduled timelines to destroy all the horcruxes, prove Voldemort's existence to the world, personally destroy the reputation of the Weasleys and Albus Dumbledore and try and get as many allies for the war as possible.

A simple enough plan but very difficult to implement.

Hope you liked it. How about dropping a REVIEW to let me know?

Stay alert for the next chapter, it'll be up soon...

Kisses,

~ Gatonio.

Chapter 5

The Life and Lies of Lily Evans-Potter

"Well that was certainly a lot to absorb." Hermione said as she sat down on a chair in the kitchen.

Harry was about to reply but was interrupted by Sirius' loud snores.

"How long will he stay asleep Harry?" Hermione asked clearly annoyed with the sound.

Harry shrugged, "A while, the potions were meant to be strong enough to make Sirius have a heart-attack if he screamed long enough. If I hazard a guess, I assume that Molly hoped that Sirius would kick me out in anger and she would grab the opportunity and adopt me. Thus, taking over my family fortunes."

Hermione's eyes widened at this and she sniffed angrily, "She will pay." Hermione growled.

Harry kissed Hermione soundly, effectively subduing her. Their activities brought them to the living room and they were having an all out snog-fest till the sound of throat clearing shook them out of their 'activities'.

"I'm sorry for interrupting but will you please explain what is going on here?" A werewolf growled at them.

Hermione blushed crimson and hid herself in Harry's chest and Harry sighed sadly as he wrapped his arms around her.

"To sum it up, Hermione gave me a rather... memorable birthday present last night." Harry smiled cheekily at this and Hermione squatted his hand in annoyance. "Well, Molly didn't appreciate it and tried to, well I'm not really sure what she was trying to achieve. Anyway, she tampered with Sirius' food with a 'draught of rage' and an 'overreaction' potion. Sirius was angry when she not-so-subtly mentioned Hermione's... gift. I pointed the truth out and Sirius kicked the Weasleys out of Grimmauld Place."

Remus stared at him dumbfounded. Of all the things he had expected to hear, this was certainly not one of them. Well, Harry

really was his father's son, only James could manage such a feat and still pretend like it was nothing at all.

"Well... I'm surprised with Molly's behaviour. Though it does strike me as odd she would do such a thing." Remus pondered while trying to abate the shock, "And why is Sirius asleep?" He added as an afterthought.

"Sirius is asleep because I cast a sleeping charm on him till the potion's effects wear off. Its safer this way. Molly did what she did in the hopes of setting me up with Ginny and Ron with my Hermione. She, and of course I can only speculate here, wanted to take control of my vaults and monies and effectively milk me for all I'm worth to redeem the Weasley family name."

Remus was floored, well, the lad had a good reason. He was so shocked that he didn't even think to ask how Harry managed to cast a sleeping charm without getting into trouble.

"Anyway, onto more pressing matters, I feel there is a pre-arranged meeting at Gringotts for us. Hermione shall accompany us of course. Shall we leave?" Harry asked upbeat.

Remus merely nodded and after altering Harry and Hermione's looks to make sure they were unrecognizable in public, they flooded to the Leaky Cauldron.

A boy with dirty blonde hair and electric blue eyes stepped out of the fireplace followed by a light brunette with slightly green eyes. Then came a shabbily dressed dark-haired man with a goatee and an interesting set of pale grey eyes.

The odd trio made their way to Diagon Alley and walked calmly up to Gringotts Wizarding Bank.

Once through the security check: Harry Evans-Potter, Hermione Granger and Remus Lupin appeared as before. The goblins looked at them surprised but let them pass nonetheless.

Harry was marching up to the nearest free goblin-teller flanked by Hermione and Remus on both sides. As he made his way there he caught a snippet of conversation from the side.

"...I tell you he's cleared up the vaults. Not like he found anything there mind you, they were pretty much bereft anyway."

"I wonder what he was looking for?"

Harry continued undeterred and walked up to the now free goblin-teller.

"My name is Harry James Evans-Potter and I am here to enquire about my vaults."

To everyone's (including Harry's) complete surprise, the goblin-teller fainted on the spot. The one he was conversing with before seemed to have his wits about him. He tentatively called to Harry and asked him and his pariah to follow him.

They made their way across the hall to the main teller and the guiding goblin and the main teller seemed to have an enlightening conversation in fluent Gobbledygook.

The only part of the conversation Harry actually followed was the mention of his own name with 'Evans' added into the equation. This seemed to startle even the main teller and his scowl disappeared to be replaced by pure and utter horror. He roughly pushed the goblin he was talking to aside and immediately spoke to Harry with reverence.

"My-My Master Evans," he whispered with utter worship in his eyes and bent down on one knee, "your humble servant is honoured to serve you in any endeavour."

To say Harry, Hermione and Remus were surprised was an understatement, to say they were shocked into speechlessness, now that was somewhat accurate. Goblins never bowed down to anyone (or anything) remotely human. They shunned centaurs because they 'seemed' human from the torso up. Here was the main goblin teller of Gringotts abandoning all their pride and arrogance and bending to Harry Evans.

"Please, I hate it when people bend, kindly stand and guide us with you to a more suitable venue to discuss our... situation."

Upon hearing Harry, the goblin immediately stood up and guided Harry and his companions to a high security room on the back of the building, all the while, he mutter things about 'an actual Evans', 'unbelievable!' and the like.

After entering the simple sitting room, the goblin kindly asked them to seat themselves comfortably while he went to fetch someone to handle their 'esteemed' affairs. Saying so he scuttled away (however a goblin scuttles that is).

"So any idea what that was about?" Harry asked Remus and Hermione as their mouths hung open. Harry chuckled at the sight of them and Hermione shut her mouth heading into full rant mode.

"This is not a time for laughter! I cannot believe this Harry! Goblins never treat wizards as something worthy to even look at, much less treat like a God like they did with you."

"I wonder..." Remus mused.

"Knut for your thoughts." Harry murmured.

"Not once were you referred to as 'Potter', it was always 'Evans'."

"Yeah I kind of caught on to that too, any idea why? Did my Mum save the Goblin Nation or something?" Harry asked conversationally, though internally he was brimming with questions.

Remus shook his head sadly, "I don't know Harry. As much as I hate to admit it, I only really got to know Lily in our fifth year when we were prefects together. Even then I only looked to her as my co-worker and fellow housemate. It was really in seventh year when James and she started dating did I ever really speak to her, although she was an amazing woman Harry. I remember how she was so diligent and studious and hard working, not resting till she figured everything out to the tiniest detail. She was even sanctioned some extra lessons over weekends because Hogwarts coursework could not satisfy her."

Hermione looked indignant, "Why was I never given the opportunity?"

"I think that explains why my Mum is so famous here. She is obviously something akin to royalty or the like the way they treat her. She probably did it during her 'lessons' over weekends." Harry wondered incredulously.

He felt so stupid for never having enquired about his mother in the past. He knew she was a Charms' Mistress and Head Girl and an all-out Hermione basically, but never anything personal.

The door opened and a grand-looking Goblin walked in hurriedly.

"My esteemed Master Evans, it is a true honour to be bask in your presence. I am Master Goblin Ragnok." Said the regal goblin as he did a sweeping bow.

Harry stood up and seeing him so did Remus and Hermione.

"Master Goblin, I am equally honoured and humbled by your greeting and return it earnestly." Harry was glad he was well-versed with goblin pleasantries, having begged them to join his side of the war resulted in him learning their ways. They still refused to be his allies, preferring neutrality in a 'wizard problem'. Maybe this time would be different.

The goblin looked surprised and smiled toothily, although it looked eerily like a predatory smile.

"We have waited long and hard for your arrival Chosen Master Evans." Said the goblin, seeing the confused look on the three wizards faces he pressed on, "I see you are in the dark, Late Mistress Evans assured us this would be your situation when you finally came here."

"You... you knew my mother? Lily Evans-Potter?" Harry asked hopefully.

"Aye Master, I did. She truly was a remarkable woman. I gather you know not of the extensive Evans history."

Harry nodded sheepishly but the goblin seemed undeterred.

"Let us sit, this may take a while."

Everyone took their seats and the goblin began a story more fantastic than magic itself.

"A secret family of pureblood wizards hated the crimes of the other purebloods on muggleborns. They formed a society that is known as 'The Night Fox'. The secret family was the 'Evans'. When the last matriarch leader of the Evans, Mistress Magnolia Evans moved to the great beyond leaving no heirs, the organization was in disarray. They happened across Magnolia's squib uncle, one Orchis Evans. Orchis had only one son who did not manifest with wizardry. That son had two daughters, Petunia and Lily Evans. Petunia was a squib too but Lily was the new Mistress Evans when she got her Hogwarts letter."

Harry, Remus and Hermione stared dumbfounded yet the goblin continued as if not noticing their expressions.

"Everyone in Hogwarts believed that Mistress Evans was an unsuspecting muggleborn but in fact she had been tutored excessively to become a Mistress since she was discovered at age 8. When she entered Hogwarts three years later, she was a Level-Two Fox-in-Training and a Mistress of Charms. Never had a child so young achieved such greatness even before they attended Hogwarts."

The goblin's eyes seemed to glaze over as if remembering memories long forgotten, "a truly remarkable woman..." he sighed.

Harry took in a sharp intake of breath and worked incessantly to keep the tears from escaping him. 'My Mum was a great witch and I never bothered finding anything out about her thinking she could never be of any help. How could I have been so stupid?'

"Her years at Hogwarts involved keeping a low-profile at school while continuing her training as a Fox. She broke all expectations when she finished her training and ascended to her rightful place as Mistress Evans at the end of her sixth year."

Remus and Hermione visibly gasped at that. Harry though really wanted to know more.

"Exactly what did the 'Night Foxes' do?"

The goblin smiled knowingly at his question, "'The Night Fox' was an underground organization run jointly by goblins and neutral wizards and witches under the aegis of the Evans family. They had been running this organization for three centuries. We worked together to evacuate muggleborn witches and wizards and even targeted half bloods and squibs from the terror of the Dark Lord of the Age. Those saved were given the option to flee the British Isles or join our ranks to fight."

Harry mumbled the next question softly, "How many did my Mum save?"

"She saved over 300 muggleborns, squibs and half-bloods single-handedly while was part of rescue operations for over 2,000 others. In fact she completed her first assignment of saving a tortured muggleborn witch held in an insane asylum due to her abilities when she was merely 10 years old. As I said before, a truly remarkable woman..."

Harry stared at the goblin with hollow eyes for several minutes as he absorbed the information he was just given, he wiped a tear from his eyes, "my Mum was a saviour..."

The goblin nodded sadly, "She was, a brilliant one at that, it was a heavy day when she passed away."

There was a long pause when no one spoke and tears freely flowed down Harry's cheeks.

The goblin finally spoke up, "Master Evans, there is more for you to know. There is a reason that Mistress Evans suddenly fell in love with her long-time school nemesis James Potter."

Harry's head shot up at that, "wh-what do you mean?"

The goblin produced a glowing white globe from his robes and said, "this was a prophecy made for Late Mistress Evans, she was truly the mother of the Chosen One as predicted and she fulfilled her role."

He shook the globe and a voice could be heard, a male voice, almost non-human:

The mother of the Chosen shall come from the darkness

She will lead a hidden light to save those needing it

She must find the pureblood of light stupidity

With him she will mother the true child of light.

The mother of the Chosen shall come from the darkness...

"So-so, my mother married my father for the prophecy?" Harry couldn't believe it! Everyone always told him how much his mother and father loved each other dearly, and now, everything he knew fell right in front of him.

"Actually her original choice was Arthur Weasley." The goblin said conversationally.

Remus and Hermione finally broke out of their stupor and screamed, "WHAT!"

The goblin looked surprised and said, "She was in fact going to pursue him one night but returned with a changed mind after speaking to one Molly Prewett who was desperate to have the Weasley heir. She begged and pleaded Mistress to go for someone else and Mistress consented provided Ms. Prewett would align the Prewetts and Weasleys to the Evans and their Chosen. Prewett consented and a subservience and loyalty bond was formed. They were owned by the Evans family legally."

Harry fell back in his chair and said tonelessly, "Tell me Master Goblin, if the Weasley family adopted the last heir of the Evans and christened him a Weasley, what of the bonds?"

The goblin looked visibly distressed by this scenario, "If this were done Master, then the Weasley family would come in control of the Evans' fortunes and affairs and have the previous bonds annulled."

Harry stared despondently at the goblin. He assumed that Molly Prewett had tried to pair him up with Ginny and adopt him because at some twisted level, she loved him like a mother. The truth was that she wanted to save her family and herself from being slaves. How could she think Harry would ever do that to her? How could she

use Harry so? How could she 'program' her own daughter to behave in such a manner?

Harry nodded weakly, "Thank you Master Goblin, please continue."

The goblin looked like he wanted to ask how such a situation would come about but held his tongue, he was extremely aware of the famous Evans temperament, "After crossing off Mr. Weasley, she had two options: Frank Longbottom and James Potter. She desperately wanted it to be Longbottom but her dearest and only friend of her age had been courted by Longbottom. She instead decided upon James Potter as her only option to fulfil her role set forth by Fate."

"Master Goblin, at any point in her marriage, did my mother ever truly love my father?" Harry asked hopefully.

The goblin looked deep into Harry's eyes and answered honestly, "No. Not that I know of. Although, I was one of your mother's confidants since she was a child and I'm sure she would have told me if her affections towards Mr. Potter had altered, which they did not. In fact she disliked him with a passion but swallowed her pride for you, her heir and our saviour."

Harry was shaking and Hermione engulfed him in a hug wordlessly.

The Goblin continued, "Do not judge her Master Evans, she loved you and the evidence of that is the sacrifice that kept you safe from the Dark Lord. Only unbelievable love and pure sacrifice could achieve a feat like that. Only a woman with the strength, calibre and passion that your mother possessed could achieve that."

Harry merely nodded, though he didn't admit it, he needed to hear that his mother loved him from someone who knew his mother as much as Ragnok admitted he did.

"So my mother married my father for me?" Harry muttered weakly.

"Yes, because you were meant to be a saviour for all. You are the true leader of our cause to save discriminated witches and wizards and magical creatures alike. It is you that must lead the Night Foxes back to our former glory and do justice to the sacrifice that your mother made. Not only the sacrifice of love that kept you safe but

also the sacrifice of her life when she married the one man she truly despised." Ragnok finished.

There was a heady silence and Ragnok finally stood, breaking it, "There will be a goblin sent here to take you to the ancestral Evans vaults. Late Mistress Evans gave specific instructions for how they are to be treated."

Harry nodded.

"Also, Headmaster Dumbledore has seen to emptying your Potter vault. Needless to say, he was getting nothing as all of the Potter fortunes were moved to the Evans' vaults as soon as your mother married your father."

Once again Harry was surprised at his mother's ingenuity.

'Chaos?'

'Yes love?'

'Could you - could you tell my mother I'm sorry I never found out about her before? Could you tell her that I'm sorry she sacrificed her life for me and I am... I am always going to love her?'

'Of course love, stay strong, you have several trials ahead of you.'

Chaos' consciousness withdrew from Harry's mind and Harry wailed like a broken child in his lover's arms.

Hermione hugged him fiercely, drenching him in her own tears, "It's okay Harry; she loved you! More than life itself! She loved her baby Harry not the Chosen One and you know that, she still loves you from the beyond and you know that too..."

Harry silently nodded in her embrace as she soothingly rubbed his head, "I know 'Mione, I know..."

Remus stood there absently watching the exchange while dealing with the mounting burden thrust upon him.

'Lily never loved James. She continued to hate him with a passion.' Remus thought dismally.

A new goblin shakily came in and spoke, "Griphook has been asked to escort the young Master to his vaults."

Harry nodded and sighed deeply. He cleaned his face to appear more presentable and indicated to Hermione and Remus to follow him.

The foursome left the waiting/meeting room and were crossing the main hall where they met the last man Harry wanted to deal with at the moment.

A white-bearded man in bright blue robes stalked up to him and spoke magnanimously, "Harry my boy! I'm surprised to see you here. You should not be leaving your home at this time; it is very dangerous for you. I will send across any money you need for shopping from your vaults."

Dumbledore smiled his winning smile and offered his hand for support.

Harry stared at him impassively, "Tell me Professor and answer me honestly, why have you withheld the prophecy from me?"

Dumbledore visibly paled. "This is not the time and place for such things Harry."

"You have not answered my question."

"I merely wanted to protect your innocence, give you the childhood you deserve."

"I see. Why didn't you ever check up on me while I lived with the Dursleys?" Harry continued in a monotone.

"Harry, they were your family, I did not dream something bad would happen. I agree your stay was less-than-happy but it was still a roof over your head and food."

"You mean the cupboard under the stairs and the leftovers from the dustbin."

Dumbledore paled further, his grandfatherly act falling with every subtle accusation. Remus looked livid but not close enough to the anger displayed by Hermione.

Harry noticed Hermione silently exchange a whispered conversation with Griphook who smiled and nodded handing her something.

"Harry, you exaggerate, surely it wasn't as bad."

"That we will discuss at the Ministry Hearing where you will be tried for your questionable judgement, Headmaster."

"Mr. Potter!"

"Oh and that reminds me, why did you hide the truth of my mother from me? Why did you hide the Evans' history from me?"

Dumbledore looked ready to faint at this accusation.

"I... I..."

"Let me tell you why Professor. You thought that by having the Chosen One in a terrible household with a horrible childhood would completely destroy his sense of self-esteem. Having his Godfather and surrogate Uncle kept away and true rights denied, you could achieve whatever you wanted with a meek and malleable 'weapon' for you to shape as per your liking. Once you had the puppet to destroy the Dark Lord under your control, you would emerge once again as the powerful, saviour of the wizarding world and 'save' us all."

Dumbledore gulped. "Harry I did not intend..."

"Oh but you did Headmaster, you very much intended for all of this to happen. You DESTROYED me you old wanker! What, pray tell me, gave you the right to do so?" Harry lost his temper.

"Harry! You will speak to me with respect." Dumbledore could now ascertain what course of action to take. His insolence was enough.

"No he will NOT!" Boomed an angry Remus Lupin, "Not to a traitor like yourself!"

"Remus-" but the rest of Dumbledore's statement was lost as everyone stared in shock.

A bushy-haired, brown-eyed girl attacked the 'Greatest-Wizard-of-the-Age' with a goblin wooden staff and sent him to the ground. Everyone was too stunned to respond as Hermione Jane Granger, the stickler of rules, the girl who turned gooey eyed in front of authority figures, the girl who breathed for regulations and laws attacked Albus Dumbledore.

Hermione whacked him incessantly with the borrowed stick and literally beat him to the ground while he spluttered in utter shock. He was so surprised he didn't even think of using magic. Everyone in the main room (as in the majority of the goblins and the handful of witches and wizards) stared in muted shock to see Albus Dumbledore be beaten to the ground literally.

Harry was the first to end his daze and pulled Hermione off the old goat, albeit reluctantly. Of course she allowed him to give Dumbledore a bloody lip and broken nose in the process.

A viciously smiling Griphook guided the stunned werewolf, the Booy-Who-Lived grinning like a fool and the heavy breathing, red-faced, angry muggleborn girl to the Evans vaults.

Albus Dumbledore lay there on the ground waiting for someone to help him.

Finally a goblin came up to him and he tiredly extended his hand for support to lift him up.

The tiny goblin effortlessly lifted the old man and threw him on some of the blackened part of the main room as the goblin began to clean the blood-splattered floor.

"Don't make more of a mess old man because its rude to make others clean your blood. Don't you even know that much?"

Dumbledore lay on the ground as his head reeled from the recent, public humiliation he had suffered at the hands (albeit indirectly) of Harry James Evans-Potter. That lad was the perfect blend of James' pranks and Lily's vindictiveness and he had a girl as smart and bold as his mother on his side.

Dumbledore found himself repeating the same words in his head as Harry Potter walked away with his Uncle and friend. He later wondered if this was going to become a tradition after everyone of his encounters with the boy.

'I'm fucked!'

TBC

Well that is the crux of the story... The 'Truth of Evans' is revealed but is there a 'Truth of Potter'? Hmmm... I wonder...

REVIEW especially if you think something was not fully explained. Or you can REVIEW just to let me know you liked it. I'm sorry the update took so long but with school and everything, its hard to get enough time to write, also I wanted this chapter to be just perfect.

Next Chapter: Weasleys are put in place and 'THE HEARING'. This is going to be very interesting. Oh and Harry will assert his claims as a Potter and an Evans.

Chapter 6

The Life and Lies of Lily Evans-Potter Part 2

Harry silently led an angry Hermione down the vaults to the deeper levels of Gringotts. The goblin guiding them kept shooting Harry nervous glances but Harry ignored it, preferring to keep a firm watch on his beloved instead.

"Vault 002", came the goblin's voice as they stopped in front of a vault.

The goblin stepped forward and ran his fingernail across the midsection of the vault and it creaked open to reveal another door. When this happened, the goblin motioned Harry to come forward and place his hand on the door. Harry did so, the door shined brightly for a moment before opening up completely to reveal yet another door. This door had a muggle recorder on it.

"State your name." Came a feminine voice from the recorder.

"I am Harry James Evans-Potter" Harry replied curtly.

"State your heritage."

"I hail from the last heirs of the line of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Evans, Lily Potter nee Evans and the Most Noble and Ancient House of Potter, James Potter. I am also the god heir of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Black for Sirius Black is my godfather."

"State your claim." Came the monotone.

"I wish to claim what is rightfully mine and continue on the path set forth by every Evans before."

The recorded glowed before disappearing and the brick wall fell to reveal the biggest vault Harry had ever seen in his entire life.

"Welcome to your inheritance Master Evans." Said the goblin, "You may summon me if the need arises. I shall await you in the cog."

Harry instinctively grabbed Hermione's hand and led her with him into the vault. Remus simply gawked at the magnitude and size of the wealth that Harry had inherited.

"These are the fortunes of the Evans and Potters. Magnificent..."

From head to toe, ceiling to floor, every inch was covered in galleons, sickles and knuts. There were several gems and precious stones lying in places scattered around the vault. Harry walked forward and opened the door at the back of the vault. On entering, he came to a comfortable room where a pensieve lay in the centre.

Harry asked Hermione (who was ogling over the books like a kid on Christmas) and Remus to come over. They both complied (Hermione a bit reluctantly).

"What is it Harry?" She asked in annoyance.

Harry pointed to the pensieve.

"It is a beautiful silver pensieve Harry." Remus said sounding confused to have a pensieve pointed out to him.

Harry sighed tiredly. "It has memories in it."

This caught both their attention and they stared uneasily at Harry.

"Do you think...?" Hermione asked distantly.

"Only one way to find out." Harry said confidently.

The three nodded and approached the pensieve, brimful with silvery liquid. They bent their heads and entered.

The swirling mass engulfed them and they found themselves in an empty white chamber.

Harry then heard a voice that he had only heard once before. At that time the voice was screaming his name, begging for his life, but now when it was uttered, it was a soft caress, a loving sentiment.

"Harry..."

Harry turned sharply and was greeted by the form of his mother, a woman he only ever dreamed of seeing speaking to him.

Green met green as two identical sets of eyes faced each other. Harry noticed that his mother did indeed have red-hair that was long and flowing and reached up to her waist. Yet it wasn't the fiery Weasley red, it was reddish-copper shade that seemed to reflect her mood. Her beautiful green eyes sparkled with intelligence and unimaginable love. Her petite frame slightly shrugged and a single moist tear on her cheek.

"Mum..."

"If you are watching this Harry, I am sorry..." She sobbed silently.

"No Mum."

Hermione wanted to tell him it was just a memory but she couldn't. So she did what she could do, she held onto him and he her.

"I am sorry we never got to know each other, I am sorry you were never given what you rightly deserved. However, you have come a long way as you have discovered your entire heritage." She perked up a little and Harry nearly jumped with joy seeing her smiling face.

"There are several things you must know that I am assuming you have heard from either Murthasungar or Ragnok, whoever is still alive. As an Evans, you have the duty of being the leader of the "Night Foxes". However son, if you show lack of skill, they will reject you and the search for a new neutral leading family will begin." She said seriously and Harry nodded vigorously, "Although, I am completely certain you will be victorious, you have my intellect and your father's persistence." She smiled broadly through her tears.

Harry felt like he met a physical blow when she mentioned his father. He still hadn't truly absorbed the fact that she never really loved him. Remus shifted uncomfortably beside Harry, as he too seemed unnerved by the comment.

"This pensieve pertains to all my memories of my time as a Night Fox and at Hogwarts. It ends at the last time I was able to come to Gringotts in October 1981." She stopped and looked distantly, "some of these memories might alarm you son, but do not judge me

harshly. I did whatever I could for you. It was all always for you..." She finished in a small voice.

The white room and the vision of his mother faded away and Harry nearly screamed for her to stay.

The sight that met the odd trio was familiar to Harry. It was similar to the pensieve memory that Harry received from Snape in a different lifetime.

"What is this place?" Hermione whispered.

"Spinner's End." Harry replied surprising the two present with him.

"But this is where..." Remus started.

"Snape lives and where he and my Mum became friends and grew up together." Harry answered.

A young, eight-year-old Lily Evans with shining red hair and bright green eyes trudged unknowingly to a slight white light near a tree.

"Lily!" Came an incredulous screech.

Harry turned to see a child version of Petunia Durs... Evans following Lily and urging her to come back.

"It's ok Nia." Lily giggled happily and picked up the shiny rock creating the light.

As soon as she picked it up, it glowed brightly and Petunia screamed. Abruptly, everything stopped. Lily looked around nervously as everything: the leaves, the wind, the sounds, Petunia simply stopped.

"Nia..." She said uncertainly to the body of her sister whose mouth was mid-open in a scream.

"Things have been stopped to relay this message Mistress Evans."

Lily swiftly turned around and came face-to-face with a goblin. The goblin was taller and sharper looking than even Ragnok but he also looked heavily aged under many burdens.

She screamed and backed away from him.

"What are you!"

"I am Goblin Master Murthasungar, the interim leader of the Night Foxes and your future teacher."

"Petunia says that goblins aren't real." Lily said resolutely.

"I see... Tell me, Mistress Evans, what is your opinion on magic?"

Lily gasped. "Petunia said magic is evil... It doesn't exist."

"I see... But what about your opinion? How do you explain the strange things that seem to happen around you?" Murthasungar continued undeterred.

"I... I..." Lily spluttered.

"Let me show you something," the goblin stretched forth his hand and Lily took it uncertainly.

Lily screamed again but out of surprise as her eyes were shrouded with images of magic. Simple first-year spells, images of Diagon Alley of dragons and phoenixes, of magic and wonder.

When the visions ended after a long time (and yet no time at all), Lily asked in a small voice, "I know its real. Severus told me so. But why are you here?"

The goblin smiled toothily that caused Lily to take a tentative step backward.

"All in good time Mistress Evans." He answered not even noticing her discomfort.

"Please call me Lily..."

"As you wish Lily."

The memory faded and changed and now a slightly older Lily Evans stood in front of the Goblin Master and this time Ragnok stood beside him.

Lily looked about ten-years-old, but she seemed to lack the innocence of a ten-year-old. Her emerald eyes held a deep maturity and understanding of the world but still a hint of fear. Hermione thought she had only seen that look once before and that was on Harry.

"The time has come young Lily for you to test your abilities." Murthasungar said jovially.

"She is too young Master Goblin." Ragnok protested.

Lily rolled her eyes at him, indicating they've had this discussion before, "Please Ragnok, if a week of debate didn't change my mind what makes you think that a few hours before my mission is going to?"

"A goblin can try, can't he?" Ragnok muttered softly like a pouting child. (However you wish to see a goblin pout)

Lily thought it was adorable though. (No wonder she and Hagrid got along.)

"Your mission is to save Ms. Maria Tupperintine. She is a muggleborn who was recently moved to an insane asylum ward after her mother deemed her a "devil's spawn." Murthasungar said this in a monotone but Lily gritted her teeth angrily.

"I'm ready." Was the reply.

The scene shifted and Harry, Hermione and Remus saw a young Lily Evans dressed completely in black such that she nearly disappeared in the night, stealthily making her way around a big building in the dead of the night. They followed her as they tracked her progress. Lily was quiet, agile and adept, especially for her age. She jumped up from the ground and before gravity acted upon her she closed her eyes and scrunched up in concentration. Her eyebrows knit together as an ungodly force pushed Lily up and carried her all the way to the roof.

Harry, Hermione and Remus stared in awe and the next thing they knew, they were standing beside Lily up on the roof as she made her way to the terrace staircase. Once at the start of the staircase, Lily tapped her head with her finger and whispered incoherently, she camouflaged with her surroundings and the three spectators were once again amazed with her skill at disillusionment. Lily's faded outline then tapped her shoes and hand, silencing them and ran forward with her spectators hot on her heels.

Lily ran down the stairs in the dead of the night, not coming across a single figure during her run. On reaching the fifth floor, she moved cautiously towards a door with a sign 'Danger, 6-12' on it. She whispered at the keyhole.

"Alohomora".

The door opened and Lily chuckled lightly at the sheer ease of her entry, "Like taking candy from a baby", she whispered to herself.

Her smile was immediately wiped off her face when she saw the sight in front of her. Hermione squealed and Harry and Remus took two sharp intakes of breath.

Lily gauged the spectacle: a young girl, eight-years-old based on the case file Lily was given, was bound to the wall in a standing position. Her hands were tied and one could see the girl was sagging with the pain and soreness of having her hands chained above her head in such a brutal manner. Her innocent little face was streaked with tears and one could see that she fell asleep rather painfully. Her clothes were torn in various places and she had even soiled herself, repeatedly by the looks of things.

Lily and Hermione cried silently at the pitiable sight in front of them, unable to comprehend how anyone could ever do such a thing to an innocent girl.

Lily wiped away her tears and made her way to the cage, they had bound the girl in. She opened the lock easily and slipped in. A few simple cutting charms later, little Maria Tupperintine fell to the floor and Lily gently scourgified her of her bodily wastes. Lily then repaired her clothing to the best of her ability and cleaned the young girl's face.

Lily then ran several diagnostic scans on the girl, she was no healer but she could detect and possibly solve something fatal. The scans showed severe malnourishment and long-term starvation and overwork. Lily wept once more for the poor girl and the life she was given for no apparent fault of her own. She levitated Maria after putting her in a deep sleep, following which she disillusioned her.

Lily silently made her way to the rooftop, looking back at Maria every few minutes. The only action that she had after that was when the figure of a guard alarmed her as he scampered to relay the message that the 'girl' had escaped. A quick stunner, obliviation and sleep charm later, she was on her way.

At the rooftop of the building, Lily carefully pulled out a broomstick and gently places Maria on it, seating herself behind Maria.

"If only apparition wasn't so closely monitored by the Ministry." Lily wistfully wished speaking for the first time in the memory.

Harry was silently proud seeing his mother's bravery and integrity. Everyone always told him that his mother should've been a Ravenclaw because she was so intelligent. But Harry finally knew that the Sorting Hat was right as usual and Lily Evans was definitely a Gryffindor. After all, she learnt all that she did to save others.

Lily sped away on her broomstick and Harry saw her retreating figure in the darkness, "I'm so proud of you Mum..." He whispered.

The scene shifted and Lily was standing in front of a whole host of people. Murthasungar stepped forward and proudly presented Lily to the crowd in front of them.

"Night Foxes," he boomed loudly to the assortment of wizards, witches and goblins seated in front of him, "May I present the newest Evans prodigy and the youngest Level-Two Night Fox, Lily Evans."

There was a polite applause following that statement and Harry wasn't surprised to see he didn't recognize anyone in the crowd except Ragnok who looked relieved and proud at the same time.

"Um Murthasungar?" Lily spoke up uncertainly.

"Yes child?" He asked kindly, fondness evident in his eyes.

"What of Maria Tupperintine?" Lily ventured.

"She is currently in the care of healers and the hopefully they will help her through this trying time. No child should ever undergo what she did at such a young age. Her name has been removed from Hogwarts records and she is being moved to Wales where a family that the organization trusts whole-heartedly are going to be her new home."

Lily smiled satisfied by the answer.

The memory changed and Lily was sitting in her room, possibly a few inches taller, she looked like she was finishing a letter, Harry and Hermione peeked over Lily's shoulder and saw that it was addressed to Maria. Harry smiled lightly at this.

There was a knock on the door.

"Ni'a will ya ge' the do'r?" Came an older female voice from somewhere.

"Lily go and open the door." Came a thirteen-year-old Petunia's voice.

Lily sighed loudly and dashed to the door, she opened it and nearly stopped in her tracks. In front of her stood Professor Minerva McGonagall, a woman she had only heard of and seen in pictures before as Dumbledore's right-hand.

Lily plastered a fake grin on her face and Minerva smiled a genuine smile seeing the eager new student, looking years younger than how Harry remembered her

"My name is Professor McGonagall." She said kindly, "I assume you are Lily Evans?"

Lily nodded and called her mother to come in.

A matronly woman came into the living room to see what everything was about and Harry gasped. He'd never seen his grandmother before. She looked every bit like Lily, with the same green eyes and

red hair, but she had Petunia's horse neck and suspiciousness, yet they sparkled with knowledge and curiosity.

"Mrs. Samantha Evans I presume? I am here to talk to you about Lily." Said McGonagall politely, nodding her head.

Harry's grandmother nodded uncertainly and asked Minerva to come in.

Once seated in the living room, Grandma Evans (though she looked to be barely in her thirties to be a grandmother) spoke up, "So wha's 't you wish t' talk abou' Lily?" She had a thick Yorkshire accent and Harry gawked at the realization.

McGonagall smiled and said in one word, "Magic!"

The scene was engulfed in a white light and changed to the Hogwarts Great Hall. The last time Harry saw this scene it was through Snape's perspective. This time, he could see his Mum.

"Evans, Lily". McGonagall called over the list.

Lily calmly made it up the stairs and sat on the stool with the frayed Sorting Hat on her head, time didn't change its appearance it seemed.

The vision was shrouded in darkness and Harry heard the voice of the Sorting Hat.

"Ah a first-generation... WHAT is this?" The Hat exclaimed.

Lily's giggles echoed in her mind, "That was funny, I was hoping I'd get a rise out of you."

"Child... child... you are... an Evans and a budding Fox."

"You know about the Foxes?" Lily sounded surprised.

"I've sorted every one of your ancestors, although it has been a while since I've had an Evans. You will definitely be the shining one though, none of them have even a mark on you."

"Thank you."

"But the question is, where to put you?" The Hat mused, "You are shockingly brilliant, so Ravenclaw would be an excellent place, but also fiercely loyal and protective, so Hufflepuff is an option too. Your courage is, to be honest, bordering insanity and Gryffindor would be honoured to have you but your cunning dispositions would make even Slytherin cower. You are truly unique child, the perfect blend."

"Can I choose?" Lily asked carefully.

"Of course, after all, your opinion does matter the most."

"Well, the way I see it, a Slytherin Lily would stand out for surviving Slytherin as a muggleborn and attract far too much attention. A Hufflepuff Lily would never be taken seriously and wouldn't be able to make friends as they're too bent on trusting each other. A Ravenclaw Lily would be ideal for me, but not many would be willing to follow a bookworm leader if the need arises. A Gryffindor Lily on the other hand, is meant to be brave and a leader but is still allowed her intellect and loyalty."

"I see you've thought this through, very well, GRYFFINDOR!" The Hat screamed to the Hall and Lily slipped of the stool and went to her table, casting Snape a sorry expression, as he pretty much looked heartbroken.

The Great Hall vanished and Harry saw Lily walking with Severus to class. She was clutching her bag closely to herself as Snape spoke animatedly about something. They looked about thirteen or fourteen years of age.

Suddenly, Snape stopped speaking and the floor beneath him creaked and vanished. Snape fell into a three-metre deep hole and then the floor reappeared on top of him. Lily screeched in horror and turned on Snape's attackers, there stood in front of her a group of four young boys with a two dark-haired boys waving their wands proudly and arrogantly, one had long straight hair with blue eyes and a permanent smile, the other's hair was messy and distorted with brown eyes and maniacal grin.

"I remember this day..." Remus (the older one) sighed.

Harry and Hermione turned to him questioningly.

"Do not judge your father too harshly, that is all I will say Harry." He said with a resigned look.

"Potter! Black! You're going to end up suffocating him if you don't let him out NOW!" Lily said angrily while furiously trying spells to remove the tiles.

Harry could hear the faint muffling as Snape was banging incessantly on the floor from below, his bangs getting louder with time. Hermione tightened her hold on Harry, as he got angrier with his father and

"Now, now Evans, is that how you speak to your favourite Marauders?" James tutted in a surprisingly good imitation of Bellatrix.

Harry cringed in horror.

"James and Sirius I think you guys are pushing it. Let him go." Said a slightly panicked Remus from behind.

Sirius turned and faced Remus, "No! Snivellus is paying for being..." Sirius placed a finger on his chin and pretended to ponder; "I guess he is paying for being a greasy git this time."

"Oh but that was our reason last time as well," James pretended to be bothered by this.

"Well he hasn't really improved now has he? Stalking a Gryffindor girl, especially one as pretty as Lily Evans like that." Sirius said winking at Lily, as Snape's bangs got louder.

"Let him out you bloody gits or I'll make sure you two are expelled for this!" She screamed angrily.

James and Sirius laughed and Peter nervously coughed from behind (or maybe it was a laugh, Harry couldn't care less about the rat).

"Oh come now Evans, is that how you treat your saviours?" James tutted again and Harry was getting seriously annoyed.

Lily came forward and slapped James across the face and James angrily pushed her back.

"How dare you, you disrespectful Mudblood!"

Hermione gasped and Harry clenched his fists in rage. If only he could beat the living daylights out of his father.

James realized his slip up and muttered a half-hearted apology.

"Let him go you bigoted prick!"

"Only if you kiss the hero that saved you Evans?" James said cheekily.

"Never!" Lily muttered enraged and tried a whole new array of spells on the floor where she could hear Severus hyperventilating. James and Sirius laughed on as they saw her getting flustered when nothing worked.

"Please..." Lily begged, "he can't handle small spaces, he's probably hyperventilating right now. Let him go..."

"Only for a kiss as James said," Sirius chimed in happily.

Lily sighed in defeat and kissed James. She pecked his lips and was withdrawing as fast as she could but James grabbed her waist and had a full-blown out snog. Lily struggled against him and Snape's banging got louder if possible.

Sirius and to a lesser extent Peter wolf-whistled while Remus stared on dejectedly. Sirius let Snape out with a casual flick of his wand and Snape came jumping out of the hole.

He stared at the Marauders murderously but when he saw James forcing a kiss on the struggling Lily he exploded.

Tears streamed across his face as he hexed the Marauders into oblivion. They were caught completely off guard but James remained unaffected as he used Lily as a protective guard.

Sirius, Remus and Peter were on the floor and James looked at them sadly.

"Who gave you the freaking right to hex my friends?" James screeched at Snape, throwing the unconscious Lily in Snape's arms. Snape caught her daintily and after making sure she was okay and in fact conscious and breathing, he looked at James Potter.

"You can do whatever you want to me, but when you touch my friend, you pay." Snape said angrily.

"Like you being a Slytherin care for a mudblood!" James taunted evilly.

Lily got to her feet carefully, after asking Snape if he was ok she raised her middle finger at James and slowly stalked off with Snape supporting her weight.

As an after thought she added from a distance, "By the way Potter, you're a terrible kisser!"

Lily and Snape walked away leaving a furious James Potter in their wake.

As the scene was changing Harry stared accusingly at Remus whose eyes were downcast.

"How could you stand by and let that happen Remus?" Harry growled.

Remus was taken aback but didn't know how to answer so he remained quiet.

The next scene was of a much older Lily Evans (maybe sixteen or so) falling on her knees with tears in her eyes.

"No... no! Ragnok, Murthasungar! Please no! I am not the mother of the Chosen One! No!" Lily continued to shake her head in denial vigourously while Ragnok looked on sadly.

"My child..." Murthasungar said sadly, "we did not even know it was you, but all the signs point to it. It is your destiny..."

Lily stood mechanically, wiping away her freely falling tears, "very well, who are my options?"

Ragnok looked heartbroken but spoke like a General, "There are three potential candidates that we have narrowed this down to, Arthur Weasley, Frank Longbottom and... James Potter." He whispered the last name but he immediately regretted it as it brought along a fresh bout of tears.

"Never will I bare MY child with James bloody Potter!" She wailed angrily. "Frank is besotted with my friends Alice, I cannot do that to her. But Arthur Weasley is a good option. He is an honest man and I can see myself marrying him..." Lily perked up.

Murthasungar nodded.

"You must speak to him as soon as you can Lily," he said, "in fact the sooner the better."

Lily nodded and in the next scene, Lily stood in front of the Burrow. She was whispering to herself.

"Arthur, I know we don't know each other very well, but it is imperative you listen to me..."

She sighed dejectedly, it was going to be an awkward conversation.

She was about to knock on the door when she heard a voice behind her scream, "Stupefy!"

Lily whipped her wand out and blocked the stunner with a silently cast shield.

"Come out and I won't hunt you down." Lily said calmly but leaving no room for argument.

A slight sound from the bushes and a very young looking Molly Prewett came out. Her red hair flying all around her in a tangled mess as she stared fearfully at Lily Evans.

"I know you wish to marry Arthur." Molly said softly.

Lily's eyes widened in suspicion. "How do you know this?"

Molly continued in a monotone, "I heard my grandfather discuss it with my brother when they thought I was outside, they're both Night Foxes."

Lily sighed and rolled her eyes to the sky, "Fine. What is that you want that you're stopping me? Surely you know my reasons."

"I know them!" Molly replied sharply and Lily raised her eyebrow questioningly causing Molly to immediately revert back to her small, subservient tone, "He will undoubtedly be with you. You are smart, beautiful and in need of him. He will never refuse you. But I love him Lily."

Molly's eyes sparkled with tears, "He doesn't realize it yet but he loves me too. Please, leave him Lily."

Lily looked at Molly with pity and sighed sadly shaking her head, "very well Molly. I shall respect your wishes only if you promise to aid my child if I am unable to do so. Promise me the subservience of your current and future family to my son and you have my word, Arthur will never know of this encounter and I shall leave him for you."

Molly whipped her wand out and while gritting her teeth pledged subservience of her current and future family to Lily Evans' son.

Lily turned and was heading to the apparition wards to leave, a resigned look on her face.

The scene changed and Lily stood in front of James who was sporting a predatory grin. "So you finally came to your senses Evans. You realized the amazing person you were passing up for Snivellus of all people." He snarled surprisingly reminding Harry of Draco.

Lily bowed her head in defeat and nodded.

James tilted her head up and kissed her viciously, despite her lack of response.

Harry heard the sound of a man howling in pain and agony as he ran away, his black hand-me-down robes billowing around him.

James laughed into Lily's mouth and Lily simply cried at the hopelessness of her situation.

Harry gritted his teeth in frustration and shouted at his mother to not do this. He screamed and wailed as James forced her to his bedroom and she protested that she wasn't ready for that.

Hermione's hands wound around Harry's waist as the scene changed again and Harry was attempting to run into the chamber where his mother was to let her out.

It was a white room and Lily Potter laid on the bed panting heavily, her wedding ring shining in the light. This Lily looked around twenty years of age.

Madame Promfrey came bustling holding a young child with bright green eyes in her hands and tears in her eyes.

"Congratulations Lily!" She said handing over Harry to her, "It's a boy, and he has his mother's beautiful emerald-eyes."

Lily sobbed quietly as she held her baby close to herself. James proudly stalked into the Hospital Wing and hugged Lily, kissing her deeply, then looking at his son proudly.

"My son, the heir to the Potters. Welcome to the world James Sirius..." He said reverently.

"His name is Harry James." Lily snapped. "Now give me my son and get out!"

James looked at her in disbelief and Madame Promfrey quietly gathered Harry and took him away, leaving Lily and James to sort out their own problems.

"What are you talking about Lily?"

"You heard me you fucking son of a bitch! Get out of my room and never show your face again." She growled angrily.

James looked at her in complete shock that rapidly changed to anger.

"I gave you everything and this is how you repay me! You try and take away my son!" James spat.

Lily was undeterred. "As per wizarding law, a mother has primary control of her child, blood status ignored. I hereby swear on my magic and soul and disown you, James Potter as my husband." A white light floated across Lily and smashed into James, an invisible thread joining the two individuals completely faded and broke.

"As primary guardian and mother of Harry James Potter, I hereby swear on my blood and my magic and disown you, James Potter as his father. Formerly Harry James Potter is now Harry James Evans. Unconnected to you or the Potter line."

"Lily..." James looked heartbroken and defeated. "What did I do to deserve this?"

"What did you do? How dare you ask me this! You took advantage of me against my will. Tormented my closest and best friend for years, manhandled me at every opportunity you got. Do you want me to continue?" She said angrily.

"But Lily..." James was crying silently.

"Leave!" Lily said emotionlessly.

As the memory shifted for the umpteenth time Harry was finally emotionally drained for the day. He had seen enough and seeing his mother divorce his father as soon as he was born gave him a sense of relief.

"My father was a pureblood bigot." Harry said softly, it wasn't a question.

Remus' eyes were sparkling, "The James Potter you see in front of you was not my friend. My best friend was not the man who treated his wife in such a manner."

"I wish I could believe you Remus, but my mother believes something completely different." Harry whispered.

Hermione kissed Harry soundly and Harry didn't even try to return the kiss. He just stood stiff as he saw from the corner of his eye as

Lily stood in an old house room talking someone he had seen once before. Only the last time he had seen this particular individual, she looked completely deranged and had been in the care facility of St. Mungo's long-term ward.

"Lily, he has been apologizing for months. You haven't even let him see his own son since after he was born. He's learnt his mistake Lily..." Alice Longbottom argued exasperatedly.

Lily looked at her fiercely, "I will speak to him only to shut you up Alice, I doubt anything he has to say will change my mind."

Lily left the room with a relieved Alice in her wake and descended the staircase. In front of her stood the man Harry loved to loathed in a single day.

Although this James Potter was very different from the other memories. He looked like a right mess and had deep, dark circles under his eyes. When he saw Lily he didn't show his characteristic grin of superiority, instead, it was a forlorn look of guilt.

"You look stunning as ever Lily." James sighed in relief.

"I see a year of separation has taken its toll on you James."

James nodded sheepishly but continued, "I cannot ever apologize completely for all the things I've said and done to you over the years. I cannot even say that I understand what you are going through because I don't and I am the cause of all the misery in your life. I cannot even ask you to consider taking me back because I am not worth it."

Harry, Hermione, Remus, Lily and Alice wore equally incredulous looks on their faces as they heard the grand apology of the most arrogant boy of Hogwarts.

"James..." Lily said kindly and James' head shot up from the ground, tears running from his eyes.

"You have punished me sufficiently Lily. You left me bereft just as I forced you into an unhappy marriage. I think that at least when it comes to grief in a hopeless situation, we are on equal footing."

"James I-" But James raised his hand and silenced her.

"I have not seen my son since he was born, all I know is that he has his mother's beautiful eyes and shares his father's name. I walked into an empty home with a bottle of brandy when my parents were killed in a raid. My best friends are so busy fighting a war that they have no idea that I've lost my marriage and my child and wife. I have received nothing but hatred from the woman I loved the most and as much as I hate to admit it, the hatred is justified, as my actions are the cause of it. All I can say is, I'm sorry Ms. Lily Evans for all the pain and the grief. If you can find it in your heart to give me a second opportunity or even a shred of forgiveness, I would be grateful and never let you down."

James turned away from the two women (and unknown spectators), "I..." James' voice cracked but he continued resolutely swallowing his sob, "I wanted to see... to see Harry, but... I understand if you don't want the shadow of a man such as myself tainting him."

Lily felt a single tear run down her cheek as she said through a sob, "You really have changed James?"

James whirled around and looked deeply into Lily's eyes, brown met green and he bounded to her and engulfed her in a hug. Lily returned his hug but pulled away, wiping her tears, "Let's just take it one step at a time James. Also, we need to go into hiding, the Dark Lord is coming after Harry, he needs his mother... and father."

James looked happy and alarmed at the same time, "Why is the Dark Lord interested in Harry?"

"All in due time James, we have a lot to catch up on. Tell me, have you heard of the 'Night Foxes'?"

Alice smiled at the recently reconciled couple and left them silently as they sat down and Lily finally opened up to James.

Harry stared dumbfounded at the memory and Remus and Hermione sobbed in happiness.

"She forgave him.. he changed..." Harry whispered happily.

Hermione hugged him tighter and nodded, unable to speak in fear of losing herself in her beloved's relief and grief.

The memory changed and Harry saw his mother and father sitting happily on a couch.

"Tomorrow we finally get to step out of this Godforsaken place Lils." James said happily, stroking Lily's hair reverently.

"I'm as tired of it as you are but you know the entire truth. We need to protect Harry." She said resolutely.

"I know, but a nice trip to Diagon Alley and meeting with Murthasungar is in order. Personally I'm happy I was inducted as a Night Fox secretly, I can now discreetly be an Unspeakable for the Ministry and help you guys more than you can imagine once we're out of here."

Lily smiled at her husband and said in a small voice, "You've come a long way James."

James stroked her hair again and kissed her lightly on the lips, "We've come a long way Mrs. Evans-Potter, together. I love you." He said passionately, sincerity dripping from his eyes.

"I love you too." Lily said seeming truly happy after a long time, "I'm glad I was forced to choose you, you do make a good husband, just were a bit rough at the edges."

James laughed loudly, "You were a diamond to being with love." He said honestly.

With that the last memory ended and a severely shaken up Harry, Hermione and Remus came out of the pensieve.

"She did love him... He changed... They were in love, at least in the end..." Harry said, happiness colouring his sour face.

He kissed Hermione deeply and Remus was so overwhelmed having learned such a deep secret about his long lost friends that he sat down tiredly. It was a lot to absorb.

The three silently left the vault and got into the cart. They left Gringotts after speaking to Ragnok and telling him the truth about James and Lily, surprising even him. His eyes widened in surprise and he nodded with a look of contentment in his eyes. He promised to get in touch with them after Harry's disciplinary hearing to discuss their induction into the Night Foxes and the revival of the organization. Systematically, they flooded back to Grimmauld Place where a snoring Sirius could be heard from the hall.

Harry and Hermione were knackered and they made their way up to Harry's room and without a word collapsed into bed in each other's arms.

It had been a long, long day.

A small smile was etched across Harry's face as he slept.

TBC

Wow, I've had such strong responses for the previous chapter that I'm kind of appalled.

You guys are forgetting something very important, what was the first thing JK told us about the goblins in the Potter Universe.

HP Philosopher's Stone, Hagrid's words anyone...

I'm surprised all of you took to the goblin's words so seriously when time and again we have been shown that everyone in the wizarding world has their own agenda. Furthermore, did none of you find it odd that the goblins were treating Harry as a master? I was hoping someone would ask about that, why would proud goblins ever call someone a master, especially a wizard? Something to ponder about...

Some parts of the "history lesson" as someone put it is true, like the "Night Foxes" and so on but you must get that this chapter has many, many ramifications. They will all be dealt with in due time.

Yet before flooding my inbox with flames, consider this, Harry has been deceived by everyone he held dear: Dumbledore, the Weasleys (whose betrayal runs deeper) and most of the wizarding world; do you really think his mother would betray him too?

Also the concept of James Potter being a representation of "light stupidity" is extremely fitting in my opinion, think about it, James had 3 friends at Hogwarts, all three had their own sets of problems. Sirius was rejected by his family for his 'light' ways, Remus for his 'furry little problem' and Peter for well, that's obvious I think...

He chose to surround himself with friends that would undoubtedly smother him with brotherly affection simply for accepting them, instead of branching out and making more friends who could've possibly accepted his son in a time of need... Also does no one ever pay attention to Snape's insults "arrogant like his father"? Also keeping in mind the memory from Harry's fifth year in Snape's pensieve.

James Potter was "an arrogant toe rag" as Lily put it in Snape's memories in DH.

James Potter was a lover of the limelight, which was very subtly implied by JK. After all, pranksters are pranksters (psychologically speaking) because they are starved for attention. This is obvious in Sirius' case and in James' (though we never really know why...)

Lily Evans chose her fate for her son. She could've walked away but knew that the wizarding world would have its best shot at survival only from an Evans and to boot it, he's a Potter. You say she was manipulative, that she toyed with James, answer me this, given her circumstances, what choice did she have? She wanted to give her son the best shot, and she did so. She didn't want her son to be the Chosen One, but knew he would, so she did whatever she could do. Also she never anticipated she would die as suddenly as she did, tells us what, she wanted to prepare her son herself, on her terms...

As for the Potter side of the story if you read the A/N at the bottom of the last chapter then you would've seen that there is a "truth of Potter" coming up soon.

I'm sorry this A/N is so long but some things need to be clarified.

As per another reviewer's request, the following chapter will have an encounter between Harry and his parents (Lily to be specific). There's a reason the vault scene was postponed to the next chapter.

As a closing note, I urge readers to have more faith in a writer that they once deemed as 'good'. This is a complicated plot, way more than even DH (in my opinion); I haven't even sorted out the details in my head...

I hope this clears up the air a bit... Let the flames begin...

Next Chapter: the Hearing and the induction process into Night Foxes. Also I'm planning to have a slight lemon towards the end but I'm a bit unsure if its too early.

REVIEW and please tell me if you think its good to have a lemon or not...

OR

REVIEW to just REVIEW, your choice...

Kisses,

~ Gatonio.

Chapter 7

Powerful Declarations

Harry couldn't remember the last time he had slept so blissfully. The previous day had been emotionally draining but now he was ready to face the world head on. He also felt closer to really understanding his parents for the first time in his life.

Though what was giving Harry exceptional pleasure was the feeling of the beautiful, young woman he had enveloped in his arms. Hermione slept peacefully, breathing deeply and Harry just stared at her lovingly for what seemed like forever.

'Harry?' Came Chaos' voice.

'Hello Chaos.'

'I have some good news and some bad news.'

Harry groaned, this was not how he wanted to start this perfect day.

'What's the bad news?'

'Always the pessimist.' She huffed, 'I will not be able to bond with you or guide you as much as I did before young Harry, the Great One was amused with my antics but now he fears that things will head down the steeper end if I continue pushing you.'

'That's terrible news Chaos, what am I going to do without you?' Harry was beginning to panic.

'I'm sorry son, but there is a silver lining. Since Destiny and Fate went behind the Great One's back and embodied themselves within individuals in your timeline just out of spite, I was granted the same opportunity.' Harry could sense the wheels of Chaos' mythical mind churning.

'Who have you chosen? Am I your embodiment?' Harry asked hopefully.

'Heavens no! You're way too boring and important to be an embodiment of Chaos, you are my child but are too involved with my

sisters' games to be my vassal. I was thinking of maybe taking both those redheaded twins, but after your love's little performance yesterday with her magic stick and the old goat's arse, I was won over.'

'Wait! You are choosing Hermione as your vassal!' Harry thought incredulously, 'but she's a stickler for the rules, she'd never let you takeover.'

'Ah Harry! Everyone has a bit of Chaos in them. Ever heard of the phrase 'order is born out of Chaos'? The more orderly a person, the more ability they have to be chaotic. Also, them being my vassals does not mean they will change. I've had several vassals at the same time; they are not controlled by me technically. Cases like yours where we three sisters meddle incessantly are nearly unheard of. She will simply be a little more daring and a little more adventurous than what she normally is. Of course she will definitely not be more cunning or brave, heavens knows she'd been blessed with enough of that!'

Harry smiled at this, 'That's my 'Mione... Although I am going to miss you Chaos.'

'There's never a goodbye Harry, only intervals of not seeing each other. Being immortal kind of teaches you as much. Oh! And before I forget, I have chosen your animagus form, finally!'

'What is it?'

'A cute little robin.'

'What! Chaos are you-'

'It's a joke Harry, get a grip. Anyway, I thought about it long and hard and decided that you, Harry James Evans-Potter will be, drum roll please...'

Harry was waiting nervously as he heard Chaos play a really long, unnecessary drum roll in his head.

'A... Hawaiian Water Sprite with Pixie Wings'

'A what!'

'Hehe... You should've seen the look on your face!'

'CHAOS!'

'Alright alright love, you're going to be a lion.'

'Wow... you are serious this time, aren't you?'

'Of course love! Now be a good boy and try it out as soon as you get to Hogwarts.'

'Yes Ma'am'

'Good luck Harry, hopefully I'll see you soon and let me tell you, soon for an immortal is about a few centuries.'

Harry chuckled, 'Goodbye Chaos and thank you for everything.'

With that Chaos' consciousness faded from Harry's mind for the last time and he looked at the sleeping form of his love again. This time however, he was thinking about giving her a ride as a formidable lion!

Hermione stirred after a while and looked up to see Harry staring at her, grinning like a moron.

She stretched and realized she was lying on his chest and stretching across his body. She fumbled about nervously as she reluctantly rose from his bedside and Harry reluctantly let her.

"Harry this isn't appropriate." She said breathlessly.

"Hermione do you love me?" Harry asked simply.

Hermione spluttered unintelligently and rendering Hermione Granger speechless was a feat in itself.

"Why-Why... Harry!"

"Yes that is my name as yours is Hermione. But you haven't answered my question yet. Do you love me?" Harry asked again.

Hermione sighed, "Well if you're asking me I wish to know your answer first."

"I love you Hermione.", Harry replied confidently and passionately. Hermione stared at him doubtfully.

"Harry, you may be from the future but even there you were only 17, about to turn 18. You couldn't know that for sure."

Harry considered her words before speaking, "Hermione you know very well I never experienced love as a child because of my treatment at the hands of the Dursleys."

Hermione looked startled but nodded.

"Then when I thought I did feel love it was for Ginny but I realized that was a misplaced emotion as Ginny manipulated and controlled me. I thought the Weasleys loved me as a son, but turned up wrong on that front as well. I know Sirius loved me tremendously but I never got an opportunity to build that relationship last time round."

Hermione silently sat back down and enveloped Harry in hug.

"You see Hermione," Harry continued while returning her embrace, "it took me longer than it would take most but I realized finally what love can be characterized to be. Its different for different people, but I know what love is to me."

Hermione looked at Harry's face carefully and asked him to explain what love was to him.

"Hermione, love to me is this strong feeling I have in my gut when the one I love, truly love, is in such grave peril that I lose control of myself and destroy everything around me. Love for me is this unstoppable force that drives me to extremities to protect my love. Love to me is that backdrop that I depend on every step of the way to keep me going. Love is that unclenching of my heart that I experience when I'm comforted and speak my mind and heart openly. Love to me... is Hermione Granger."

Harry smiled at her and Hermione, who thought that after yesterday she was dried of tears had a fresh batch running down her eyes.

"Harry..." Was all she could manage but Harry raised a finger to stop her.

"I know when you look in the mirror, you never feel satisfied, I know your childhood, though not as abusive as mine, was lonely. But what you do not know is that when I look at you, I see a strong, confident, beautiful and passionate woman who stands up for what she believes in. I see two mesmerizing chocolate eyes that read me like one of her copies of A History of Magic. I see this wild, untameable hair that represents the woman I love: headstrong, quick-witted and no-nonsense based with a mind of her own. When I look at you Hermione, I see my present not looking so bleak and my future holding nothing but shining promises of happiness. When I gaze at you 'Mione, I see the reason I fight, the reason I believe life has meaning, the reason I want Voldemort dead – so I can live my future and fulfil all those shining promises with you. I love you Hermione Jane Granger and whether I am 17 or 117, that will remain the truth."

Hermione couldn't speak, she couldn't think as she registered Harry's words. She did what she could do and that was hugging Harry and giving him a kiss of a lifetime.

Harry was startled by her strong reaction and responded vigorously, when it didn't look like she was going to be the one to stop the kiss, Harry moaned in her mouth. Hermione silently licked Harry's bottom lip as her lips moulded to fit around his.

Harry opened his mouth and their tongues once again lashed for dominance. The kissing continued in this manner, till Hermione undid Harry's shirt and threw it on the floor, she returned to kissing him as if uninterrupted.

They continued to explore each other's mouths as Harry gently cupped Hermione's breast in one of his hand. Hermione's hands were freely roaming up and down Harry's hardened chest and lingering for just that extra moment at his nipples causing Harry to shiver and occasionally moan in pleasure.

Harry was beginning to get agitated, wanting to touch Hermione's breasts and he quickly pulled up her shirt and descended down to her breasts. Although he had seen them and played with them just a

little while ago, it felt like an eternity since he last sucked on her perfectly taut and erect nipples.

Hermione moaned loudly when Harry began his ministrations and tangled her hands in his hair, pushing him towards her.

Barely a few minutes later Hermione felt something pressing against her thigh and knew Harry was responding to their activities.

She smiled and gently turned Harry over so she was on top of him. Harry wanted to protest being separated from the breasts he loved so much but was silenced with a well placed kiss. A surge or current passed through their bodies and they shuddered in pleasure.

Hermione went lower, trailing Harry's chest with her mouth, retuning the favour to his nipples as he moaned and lost his hands in her untameable hair. She moved lower and a bout of anticipation descended in her stomach as she saw the small trail of black hair that disappeared in Harry's pants.

Before Harry could gain coherent thought to stop Hermione, she had undone his pant button and lowered his pants and boxers to unfurl his member.

In her entire life Hermione had never seen something so erotic as she gently began to stroke his erect member.

Harry eeped and groaned in surprise and pleasure, the only word he could manage was 'Hermione...', over and over again as she raised and lowered her hands in fast motions to stroke him into ecstasy.

Much too soon, Harry twitched and his seed erupted. Hermione gently let go of his member and rose to give Harry a kiss. Harry was thoroughly exhausted after the most erotic encounter of his life and he kisses Hermione back urgently and desperately.

They fell together in bed and Harry scourgified himself with a wave of his hand, a red blush vibrant on his face. Hermione on the other hand seemed completely relaxed and she hugged herself close to Harry's frame. Her topless body so closely entwined to his that Harry could not even pull up his pants without disturbing her.

They remained that way for an hour before Hermione finally got up to shower and Harry, after many attempts of hers to get off the bed, let her go.

When Hermione entered the bathroom with laughter across her lips, Harry pouted cutely and Hermione rushed back to kiss him before running off again out of his arm's reach.

As the door closed, Harry sighed and giggled happily when remembering the best experience of his life. He was sure that right about now, he could produce a patronus that would destroy every dementor in existence.

Once decently dressed, Harry and Hermione descended the staircase and went down to the kitchen on Number 12 Grimmauld Place. They heard an argument come from the living room.

"...Remus you're wrong I tell you! NO! You are LYING!" Sirius stalked out of the room and faced Harry, he was panting heavily, his eyes deep with sadness.

"Harry, Remus is spouting nonsense about your father and mother's relationship."

"Sirius, he is saying the truth. I saw the memories myself. My parents had their rough spots, I was deeply disappointed with my father, but am still proud of him as he finally came around." Harry said calmly.

Sirius seemed to lose all semblance of thought and sat down on the ground cross-legged. He sighed deeply.

"He loved you Harry, no matter what you saw from your mother's memories, there was more to James Potter. Yes, he was arrogant and maybe a little prejudiced, but he had a right gold heart he did..."

"I believe you Sirius. He just needed to grow up and it took him a while to get there but he did indeed grow up ultimately." Harry patted Sirius shoulder comfortingly and Sirius nodded.

"Now", Hermione said clapping her hands, "we have to decide how to save Harry in his hearing, after all, it won't work if he's expelled."

Harry chuckled lightly, trust Hermione to find something involving lots of research.

Harry nodded and Sirius grunted, "Yes, I've been thinking about that. Seeing as Harry is now the heir of three Most Ancient and Noble Houses in the wizarding world, he has some considerable advantages."

"Make that four Padfoot." Came Moony's voice from the parlour, "Or at least three and a half."

Harry, Hermione and Sirius looked at Remus quizzically, to which he just smiled.

"The Lupins were also a Most Ancient and Noble House but my parents squandered all their wealth trying to find a cure to my lycanthropy. Also, once my affliction became known, our title of Nobility was taken away, making us simply the Most Ancient House of Lupin."

Harry smiled knowingly, "Thank you for your trust Remus, but I cannot allow you to hand me your legacy. There might be a future Lupin and he would be very angry if someone else got his inheritance."

"Inheritances can always be upgraded and changed in the future young Harry." Remus smiled touched by Harry's words, "However, I would be proud to add my name to your impressive list of titles."

"Huh?" Harry asked, truly dumbstruck.

Sirius filled in the gaps, "In order to take control of a Wizarding House, you must add that title to your name Harry, in fact, your official title is Duke Harry James Evans-Potter-Black."

Harry smiled widely, "I love my name."

Remus cleared his throat to gain Harry's attention, "Well Harry, if you accept my offer then I'm afraid your already elongated name will lengthen further, you will be Duke Harry James Evans-Potter-Black-Lupin."

Harry teared up; here his Godfather and surrogate Uncle were basically handing over their fortunes and histories to him. He hugged his Uncles affectionately, "I cannot tell you how much this means to me."

They sportingly patted his back while hugging him back.

"I have a question," Hermione said hesitantly, afraid she'd spoil the moment but her curiosity got the better of her, "why is Harry a Duke?"

Lupin was the one who answered, "As the Head of House, Harry gains the title given to the Head of House, the Head of House Lupin is a titled Fellow. We were Sirs but the title was reduced when our Nobility was repealed."

"The Head of House Black is a titled Sir as well, while the Head of House Potter is a Knight." Sirius added in knowledgeably.

"However, after learning of Harry's inheritance from his mother and the secretive Evans family, I looked through several genealogy texts and finally found the Evans. It seems they've descended directly from the Slytherin line."

Hearing the shocked gasps from the people in the room Lupin continued undeterred.

"As per the Wizarding Tree of History, the Slytherins had one daughter, Maya, who married the heir to the House of Evans of the time, Joshua. The line continues till a daughter and son are born but the daughter dies childless and the line is lost. It seems the son took refuge in the muggle world around the time of the Rise of Grindelwald and had squib children till Lily came along and reawakened the line. However, the Head of House Evans was titled a Duke or Duchess, depending on the Head of the time."

Hermione looked as if she was itching to ask for the book herself but she was waiting for Harry's reaction first out of courtesy.

Sirius looked livid that Lily was actually the descendent of that evil Slytherin spawn but kept his mouth shut.

"Well what do you know? Guess I am the heir of Slytherin..." Harry mused good-naturedly, "Oh wait that's Voldemort, right, forgot about that." Harry reminded himself.

"Wait, how is Voldemort the Heir of Slytherin." Remus asked revealing a text and furiously looking through it.

"Voldemort descended from Merope Gaunt, daughter of Marvolo Gaunt, the last documented and known Heir of Slytherin." Harry said informatively.

On seeing the surprised looks from Remus and Sirius he added hastily, "Seer ability guys, can't stop it from acting up." Harry lied smoothly.

Remus and Sirius looked doubtful but shrugged it off as both immersed themselves in studying the text.

Hermione and Harry sat down at the table and talked amiable till the Marauders finished whatever they were looking for.

"Oh my..." Said Sirius as he heavily sat down in front of them.

"Oh my indeed." Said Remus as he took the empty seat beside Sirius.

"Knut for your thoughts?" Harry said calmly.

"Slytherin's daughter that married into the Evans' line had two children, a son first and a daughter. The son continued the Evans line while the daughter was married into the Malfoys who branched off a few generations later into the Gaunts, leading to Voldemort." Remus said reading and interpreting the text again to make sure he hadn't missed anything.

"Okay... So what does that prove?"

Hermione gasped biting her lip in surprise, "Harry! Don't you get it? The Gaunts come from the younger generation of Slytherin's descendents, the Evans are the original wielders of Slytherin's heritage. After the Evans' line disappeared, the heritage went to the Gaunts but now that you are back, you can reclaim your place."

Harry smiled cunningly, "Ahhh, I see now. It is going to be so much fun seeing the expression on Ron's face when I tell him I'm really the Heir of Slytherin."

Hermione squatted him playfully, unable to keep the grin of her face. Remus and Sirius smiled before Sirius added something gravely, "Cub, I'm actually happy to tell you there's more."

Harry and Hermione looked up surprised, "What is it Sirius?" Hermione asked.

"The Potters as long rumoured, are direct descendents of the House of Gryffindor," Harry and Hermione's jaw dropped and Sirius continued, "and the Blacks are descendents of House of Ravenclaw."

Hermione mumbled incoherently.

Harry thought for a few moments before excitedly smiling, "Does this mean I own the school?"

"Nice try cub but only when four founders' heirs come together will that happen." Sirius laughed.

"Well..." Remus piqued in after a while.

"Remus..." Harry looked at him sceptically, "Oh wait, don't tell me, you are related to Hufflepuff aren't you?"

Remus laughed loudly, "No Harry I'm not, but it would be a good guess seeing as how things are playing out." Remus shook his head, "Actually, the descendents of Hufflepuff directly are the Prewetts and the last remaining Prewetts are now Weasleys."

"Well that seems funny since Ron's loyalty flickers like an exhausted bulb." Harry said sarcastically.

"Even so Harry, remember what Ragnok told us, you own the Weasleys." Remus said raising his eyebrows a little.

A thought dawned on Harry, Hermione and Sirius simultaneously and they all laughed simultaneously, "So let me get this straight," Harry said in between laughs, "My Mum is directly descended from

Slytherin, my Dad from Gryffindor, my Godfather from Ravenclaw and my slave family from Hufflepuff!"

"Yes, it has worked out conveniently so." Remus said happily.

"So technically my name is Duke Harry James Evans-Potter-Black-Lupin-Slytherin-Gryffindor-Ravenclaw-Hufflepuff?"

Sirius nodded and said, "You can add Prewett and Weasley in there if you want but they are subservient to you, you can choose to take any of their titles."

"Nah, I think I'm good for the names business for now. So I'm the Head of House or Heir of House for eight wizarding families?" Harry muttered excitedly.

"Yes," Sirius and Remus said together.

"Oh Harry, this is wonderful, we can find a solution together, there must be a law protecting someone who is the Head of so many Houses most of which are Noble and Ancient." Hermione said as she rushed out of the kitchen and to the library, "I'll start the research." Her distant voice came.

Harry, Remus and Sirius laughed.

Over the last few days leading up to the Hearing, Hermione had devised an excellent defence for Harry. Dumbledore tried several times to speak to Harry but was stopped midway by a very angry werewolf and Animagus. The one time he actually barged in, Harry decided to go completely Chaos on him and started muttering over and over again,

"The time of the Manipulator is coming, his reckoning shall be remembered through history."

After that pronouncement, Dumbledore turned tail and didn't show up again leaving the four individuals in peace to do their research.

Remus had made Harry sign a bunch of papers that they got speedily passed through the Ministry thanks to Ragnok and Harry was officially and legally the Head of Eight Wizarding Houses.

Finally, the day of the Hearing came. Mr. Weasley was allowed to come into Grimmauld Place and take Harry to the Ministry of Magic.

As a last good luck charm, Hermione reminded Harry of his defence and kissed him passionately till he was staring off into the distance smiling like a madman.

The journey to the Ministry was pretty much the same and as expected (by Harry at least), the time and place of the Hearing had been changed. Before he knew it, he was sitting in that very same chair with shackles on his arms.

Fudge (inefficiency and stupidity magnified) stood in front of him and started the usual entries.

"Inquisitor Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge..."

The list continued and to Harry's slight surprise no Dumbledore came to help him. Harry couldn't care less, he knew he would get out of the Hearing, whether legally or not was questionable but he had to hope for the best.

When Fudge continued his tirade of questions not allowing Harry to answer his questions Harry's head began to boil.

"I believe every Defendant has the right to defend himself." Harry stated cutting through Fudge's declaration of his guilt.

"Yes Mr. Potter you do have that right", Fudge said pompously.

"I would appreciate being able to speak freely in this matter, being shackled is hardly fitting." Harry replied coolly.

"You will be treated just like anyone else on trial."

"As the Head of eight Wizarding families, I believe I have the right to demand better seating arrangements." Harry said calmly enjoying the barrage of outraged whispers he initiated.

"Lies! You are spouting lies like you always do Mr. Potter." Fudge said angrily.

"Actually Minister if you check the files you will see that I am, as of five days ago, the Head of the Most Noble and Ancient Houses of Evans, Potter, Black, Slytherin, Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff and the Most Ancient House of Lupin."

Fudge gritted his teeth angrily.

"Verify this Weasley."

Percy looked through several files and after ten minutes of searching and confirming, he dejectedly confirmed that Harry was indeed saying the truth.

"But Lily Evans was a muggleborn witch!" Fudge said angrily.

"She was the daughter of a second-generation squib Minister. When she came back to the Wizarding World, she revived the House of Evans and now I have taken ownership as the last and only remaining heir." Harry explained, his calm infuriating the Minister even more.

"So may the shackles come off, Minister?"

Fudge made an indiscernible grunt and the shackles were off.

Harry cheerily stood up and spoke confidently to the wizards gathered in the courtroom, "Witches and Wizards of the Wizengamot, I am highly surprised by the passage of events as they have taken place but since I have now come into my inheritance, a lot of decisions will be firmly looked into. As per my defence, I believe a few drops of Veritaserum, followed by a series of questions of my choosing that Madame Bones will ask me, the matter should be cleared in no time."

Fudge looked outraged, "Mr. Potter!"

"Minister Fudge, since we are in an official setting I would prefer you referred to me by my title of Duke Evans-Potter-Black-Lupin." Seeing the look of further outrage on Fudge's face Harry had to bite his tongue to prevent himself from bursting into a fit of laughter.

"Duke Evans-Potter-Black-Lupin, we will not be wasting valuable Veritaserum on ordinary cases such as yours. It is an extremely difficult and expensive potion to brew and will not be used lightly."

"I see." Harry said calmly and looked at the full gathering, raising his arms he said, "You do not see fit to use Veritaserum but see fit to bring in the entire Wizengamot for a simple case of underage sorcery?"

Fudge looked visibly shaken as he had no answer to this declaration and Harry saw toad-woman glaring at him while patting Fudge's back discreetly.

"To make sure that our efficient Ministry is not burdened by financial losses, the Potters shall pay for the usage of Veritaserum, I'm sure Madame Bones will hand me the necessary paperwork once the Hearing is completed." Harry said regally.

Madame Bones looked at Harry sternly but he could see the smile in her eyes despite her strict monocle. She nodded and called for Veritaserum. Fudge tried vainly to prevent it from happening but the Madame effectively shut him up saying that as she was the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, she made the decision.

The Veritaserum was brought in and Harry handed Madame Bones a parchment with questions written in Hermione's impeccable handwriting. Harry was fed three drops and his eyes glazed over.

"What is your name?" Madame Bones' voice boomed.

"Duke Knight Sir Fellow Harry James Evans-Potter-Black-Lupin-Slytherin-Gryffindor-Ravenclaw-Hufflepuff."

Harry could distinctly hear Madame Bones chuckling at his overly long name.

"Did you perform a Patronus in Little Whinging, Surrey while in the presence of a muggle, knowing full well that you were not allowed to practice magic outside of school while under the age of 17 as per the Statue of Secrecy?"

"Yes, I did." Harry answered in a monotone.

Fudge waved his arms triumphantly but that was short-lived.

"Why did you need to perform this charm as it is extremely difficult to cast?"

"Dementors attacked my cousin and I as we were making our way back to my Aunt's home in Number 4 Privert Drive, Little Whinging, Surrey."

"Dementors... In Little Whinging?" Madame Bones muttered incredulously.

Harry answered anyway, "there were two of them. I cast my stag patronus and defended my cousin and myself."

"A stag! You mean you've been able to produce more than light or vapour!"

"Its always a stag, since my third year." Harry answered smug at the declaration.

People in the Winzengamot muttered under their breaths about the sheer magnitude of the feat.

Harry gained control of himself as the Veritaserum's effect wore off and he smiled at Fudge cheekily.

"Well Minister, as Head of the Houses of Evans, Potter, Black, Lupin, Slytherin, Gryffindor, Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff, I expect a full explanation why creatures of the Dark were attacking me in my muggle suburban home?"

"Duke Potter... They... We... The Ministry." Fudge muttered incoherently.

Dolores piqued in with her traditional throat clearing 'hem-hem', "I'm sorry Duke, but it seemed to me that you were insinuating that the Dementors were acting on their own free will?" She said sickly sweetly.

"Well Madame Under-Secretary, if this was not a Ministry authorized attack, I fail to realize how and why they were there in the first place.

Unless someone else is in control..." Harry let that statement hang and Fudge's face turned red.

Harry decided to go all Dumbledore on Fudge, "Minister, I implore you to see reason."

Fudge leaned forward from the pedestal and said angrily, "He's not back!"

Madame Bones quickly intervened and said, "In the case of Duke Harry James Evans-Potter-Black-Lupin, all those in favour of conviction, please raise your hands."

Several hands went up including Fudge and Umbridge (duh!).

"All those in favour of clearing the accused of all charges."

Even more hands went up and Harry lightly breathed a sigh of relief. Things seemed to work themselves out for him.

Fudge impassively slammed the pedestal, "Cleared of all charges." The court was adjourned.

As Harry left with Mr. Weasley who was busy affirming that he knew from the beginning Harry would never be convicted, Harry was wondering what he was going to do about Dumbledore. Since he hadn't shown up to protect Harry, Harry realized that Dumbledore was going to be a no-show overall. In such a case, he had to make alternate arrangements. A stroke of genius struck him (which ironically sounded like Hermione's voice in his head).

"Mr. Weasley, would it be alright with you if I spoke to Madame Bones for a few minutes?"

Arthur looked surprised but nodded anyway. He led Harry out of the lower chambers and up into the main hall. Slowly, through the various crowds, Harry found himself standing in front of the office of the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. He politely asked the Secretary outside if he could have a word with Madame Bones or at least fix an appointment for a later date if she was otherwise busy.

On hearing it was Harry Potter waiting outside, the Secretary hurriedly went to inform Madame Bones and a few minutes later, Harry was sitting in front of her desk while Mr. Weasley waited outside.

"Hello Duke Evans-Potter-Black-Lupin." Madame Bones said kindly.

"Please, that title and elongated name is for formal settings and to annoy certain Ministry personnel only, you may refer to me as Evans, Potter or Harry."

Madame Bones nodded, "Well Mr. Potter, you certainly made an impressive show today. I am curious though, what is it you wish to discuss with me?"

"Madame Bones, as you know, Senior Under-Secretary Dolores Umbridge is to be our Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher this year and the new Hogwarts High Inquisitor."

Madame Bones straightened up, that was confidential information and no one knew about it yet except Dolores, the Minister and herself.

Seeing her surprise Harry waved it off, "I have developed the ability of Sight over the summer Madame, I have seen the future with her as a teacher and let me tell you it is quite bleak."

"Seeing abilities?" Madame Bones asked sceptically.

Harry nodded, "I agree it is difficult to digest but it is the truth. I am also here to tell you in advance that I will be heading a Defence Association this year to train fourth years and above to protect themselves. Now I know what the Prophet has been saying about me, but what I have been saying is the truth, Lord Voldemort has returned and we must prepare."

Madame Bones looked at him aghast, "Mr. Potter, for making such statements alone I could land you in Azkaban prison for at least a month."

"I am aware Madame, however, I also see that you are trustworthy and in a position to be fair and just. I am offering you the pensieve memories of what truly happened that night and am requesting you

to kindly review them and reserve judgement for after." Harry stated firmly but kindly.

Madame Bones sighed, "I will review your memories Mr. Potter and I swear that I will never knowingly reveal them to anyone as a testament to your privacy unless you permit me."

Harry nodded satisfied, "That is all I needed to hear," he hopped off his chair and approached the pensieve she indicated to. After asking her if he could use his wand, he calmly took out the memories of the graveyard, Cedric's death, Crouch Jr.'s confessions and the Minister's reaction and deposited it in the pensieve.

Harry removed a parchment and handed it to Madame Bones, "Once you have seen the memories, I am convinced you will see why I have taken such a stand. If you are interested in helping me in my cause, owl a letter addressed to 'A Correspondent' at this place. You will receive an invitation shortly after about what is to be done."

To say Amelia was shocked would be an understatement, she hesitantly took the parchment and nodded politely to Harry as he left her office musing to herself, 'Now there goes a powerful wizard, a powerful man.'

Well? I certainly hadn't decided to make Harry Political!Harry but it was a spur of the moment kind of thing. Also the whole "Duke Harry James Evans-Potter-Black-Lupin-Slytherin-Gryffindor-Ravenclaw-Hufflepuff" thing was just for kicks, it just seemed right, if you know what I mean...?

Anyway, drop a REVIEW if you like or don't... Although if you don't, be gentle... If you do, exaggerate by all means...

To avoid possible future questions, Amelia (and in future Susan) are to play imperative parts in the upcoming war. It will be delicious, their roles I mean...

Also why is Harry trusting them? Because Amelia could have made a difference had she not been murdered at the beginning of Book Six, Harry wants to protect her from that fate and wants her as an ally as she's pretty up in the Ministry. Whether you've realized it or not, Harry is gaining allies for the war, the conventional ones and

some unconventional ones, even for FanFics. But that's for later, much, much later...

Also the DA is going to be way more kick-ass in my Fic and it is way more organized with a stronger Harry who had endured the harshness of war, et cetera, et cetera...

As per Ron, I'm not really sure if I want him redeemed. I'm considering it as I see a role he can play in the possible future but that role can easily be played by someone else... Needless to say there's a poll on my HomePage, please stop by and vote if you want a redeemed Ron or not?

Next Chapter: The rest of summer, the Hogwarts Express, the Opening Feast, Harry's first DADA lesson and maybe some unique bashing of several people who I haven't decided yet.

Kisses,

~ Gatonio

Chapter 8

The Requirements of a Night Fox

After Harry got back from his disciplinary hearing, he was immediately assaulted by an overzealous Hermione who was happy to hear that everything had gone to plan. She was also (to Harry's great relief) happy with Harry's actions regarding Madame Bones. Sirius, Remus, Harry, Hermione and Tonks (who was allowed to join in after Harry's approval) spent the evening celebrating their victory. The night ended with a very passionate Hermione truly expressing to Harry exactly how happy she was with his hearing.

The following day as Harry sat at the coffee table contemplating how good things were going, he received an owl with an official Gringotts seal on it. He swiftly opened it and read its contents with a satisfied smile. He called in Hermione, Remus and Sirius and they read the letter too.

Dear Duke Evans-Potter-Black-Lupin,

It has come to our attention that you have successfully avoided the snapping of your wand at the disciplinary Hearing regarding your case of the use of underage sorcery.

Gringotts would like to offer its heartfelt congratulations at this feat and would like to invite you as a 'friend to the Goblin Nation' to discuss current affairs in light of this achievement with your trusted companions.

A meeting at 9 AM, tomorrow morning would be excellent as there are several matters we need to catch up on.

Furthermore, we will be having an extra guest who spoke to us through a correspondent and is quite eager to meet you. We hope you will not judge us for overstepping our boundaries and inviting said guest to the meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Ragnok.

Master Goblin of Gringotts Wizarding Bank.

Sirius whistled appreciatively, "talk about encoding to the letter."

"The goblins are known for their thoroughness." Harry said matter-of-factly.

"Harry, I wanted to ask you something." Remus said uncertainly.

"Of course Remus."

"I was wondering if Tonks could join in on the Night Foxes. She is an exceptional Auror, especially for her age and will do anything to stop Voldemort." Remus said shyly.

Harry chuckled but it soon turned dark, "Don't get me wrong Remus, I trust her, but she has sworn an oath to the Order of the Phoenix. She will have to divulge information to Dumbledore if he forces her."

"But Harry, wouldn't that apply to Sirius and Remus as well?" Hermione piqued in.

"It would have, but since I have been made the official and legal heir to the Houses of Black and Lupin, Sirius and Remus owe their allegiance first to me, then to any oaths they take." Harry explained calmly.

Remus huffed sadly.

"Well there's an easy solution Harry," Hermione continued happily, "as Head of House Black, you could simply accept Tonks as a member of the Black family, thus, she'd owe her allegiance to you over Dumbledore."

"That's brilliant Hermione!" Harry said lovingly to his exceptionally smart beloved, "Remus, get Tonks here as soon as possible."

Two hours later, Sirius guided Harry through the official method of inducting members into his House and Nymphadora Tonks was now rechristened Dora Black-Tonks. Needless to say, Dora was extremely happy with her additional last name but more so with her modified first name. The rest of the day passed in bringing Dora firmly into the fold of things and letting her know exactly how much Harry was involved in stopping the war against Voldemort. They did

not tell her the prophecy, fearing that if the information was spread out too much, it would leak.

They made plans and the next day saw, a blonde boy with blue eyes, a dark brunette with green eyes, a shabbily dressed man with piercing grey eyes, a short woman with yellow hair and a pig-like nose and finally a dog resembling a grim, step out of the fireplace in the Leaky Cauldron and head towards Gringotts Wizarding Bank.

Upon entering the bank, their appearance charms did not hold and Harry, Hermione, Remus, Tonks and Sirius (who was still a dog) made their way to the main Goblin teller.

When the Goblin teller saw Harry, he welcomed him profusely and guided him to the back room where Harry was met with an interesting sight. Sitting in front of him were Ragnok, Griphook, some two other goblins he did not recognize and Madame Amelia Bones who looked relieved to see him. As he stepped in, they all got up automatically and Harry greeted them all courteously.

Madame Bones stepped up to Harry and did something Harry never thought he'd see the strict Department Head do, she enveloped him into a hug and choking back a sob said, "You are a brave, young man Mr. Potter. You have seen far too much than what a child at your age should have seen."

The goblins stared surprised at this proclamation but made no show of it.

Amelia settled back down and Harry (after recovering from shock), thanked her for her kind words.

When they were all seated (Dora shooting apologetic looks at her Boss for going behind her back and joining a rogue organization and silently pleading not to be fired), Ragnok stood up and addressed the gathering.

"We are gathered here today to discuss the reconvention of the Secretive Night Foxes. I, Ragnok, Master Goblin of Gringotts am here as temporary Head of the organization till we have enough quorum to vote on our new Head and till all our Operatives are registered as complete Foxes." At the last statement he looked at Harry and his group.

"Madame Amelia Bones, was contacted by Duke Evans and has arrived early as per our request to be briefed on the organization and its origin and purpose. I gather that Mr. Black and Ms. Black-Tonks are also fully aware of this?"

Harry nodded calmly and then turned to Amelia. "I should have you know that Sirius Black is innocent and is in this room at this very moment."

As he finished speaking, Sirius transformed back into his original form and Amelia immediately screamed, she stood and pointed her wand right at him.

"What is the meaning of this? Consorting with known convicts!" She screeched.

The room was tense as Remus and Tonks jumped to Sirius' defence.

"He's innocent Madame Bones and we can prove. If anyone is to be blamed it is the Ministry of Magic for their inefficiency at convicting an honest man." Remus said fiercely.

Amelia seemed to lose her composure for a second before her resolve hardened. "Lies!"

"I believe I have an easier solution for this." Harry stated calmly. He withdrew his wand and spoke, "I swear on my life and magic, my home and heritage that Sirius Orion Black was and remains innocent of the crimes he was convicted of. He is an escapee of Azkaban prison but was never responsible for the betrayal and subsequent death of the Potters, for the murder of 13 muggles in an open alleyway or Peter Pettigrew. He is not a Death Eater and never was one."

The white light engulfed Harry and Amelia fell back into her seat dejectedly when she saw Harry stand calmly (and very much alive) after the proclamation.

"But this means... this means..." She spluttered.

"I was convicted for 13 years without a fair trial Madame Bones, and former Department Head Barty Crouch Sr. made certain of that." He said venomously.

Amelia sighed, "I, on behalf of the Ministry of Magic, would like to offer our deepest and sincerest apologies ."

"I accept your apology Madame Bones, as for the Ministry, we'll cross that bridge when they stop trying to hunt me down." Sirius said coolly.

"Well, now that we have that settled we would like to offer immediate membership to Madame Amelia Bones, Department Head of Magical law Enforcement and Head of House Bones as a Night Fox. Having had many years in experience with fighting Dark Lords and being a skilled and experienced Auror, you are fully accepted and fulfil all requirements for a Night Fox. Do you accept Madame Bones?" Ragnok asked regally, not missing a beat.

Amelia was a little surprised by the open invitation and accepted.

"This invitation is also extended to Werewolf Remus Lupin, former Head of House Lupin and a Master of Defensive Magic. Do you accept Mr. Lupin?"

Lupin smiled and accepted.

"For being one of the youngest Aurors in a decade and impressive Metamorphmagical prowess, this offer is extended to Auror Dora Black-Tonks. Do you accept Ms. Black-Tonks?"

Tonks blushed at the praise and nodded her approval vigorously.

"And finally for being a former Auror and Defensive Magic Specialist, also for having survived Azkaban Prison for 13 years and achieving the feat of Animagi, we would like to extend this offer to Mr. Sirius Black, former Head of House Black. Do you accept Mr. Black?"

Sirius didn't even think twice before accepting.

"Now Duke Evans and Ms. Granger, we would like you to offer any relevant information you wish to divulge that would help ascertain

what level of Night-Fox training we should place you in." Ragnok asked politely.

Hermione looked pensive and asked, "What would you consider relevant? What are the requirements?"

"The requirements to being a Night Fox are straightforward but demanding, a complete devotion to the maintenance of life of those subjected to any and all forms of prejudice. Great magical prowess in one or more particular fields, stealth and efficiency and faith in our cause."

Harry nodded and stood, he pulled his wand to his head and extracted memory after memory for the goblins' pensieve that was placed in the corner.

"These are, in my opinion, relevant memories that fit the required fields for membership. They include myself and Hermione and you may peruse them to determine our position."

The four goblins and four adults stood and methodically made their way to the pensieve. Madame Bones seemed a bit weary about what she was about to see but held her breath as she plunged into the pensieve with her fellow Foxes.

Harry and Hermione sat down once the others were involved in seeing the memories.

"Are you sure that was the right decision Harry? Showing them all those memories?" Hermione asked tentatively.

"We need to trust each other if we ever plan to succeed Hermione and this is necessary so that we're trained from a time good for us. Also I think we should come up with a response to the Daily Prophet. Maybe a certain beetle could help us on that front?" Harry said conversationally.

"Harry, as much as I agree with you, don't you think we're moving too fast? The war hasn't broken out yet, we have time..." She let that statement hang and Harry looked at her with a tilted head.

"Hermione, three years from now, you and I will be hiding in tent, scouring to gather enough food to barely fill our stomachs. My

wand will be broken and you will be losing two of your fingers due to frostbites permanently because we wimply can't go to St. Mungo's to get in fixed, being wanted and all. Do you really want to put ourselves into that situation again?" Harry asked softly but his words struck deep and Hermione sharply intook her breath.

"I'll owl her tomorrow, you're right Harry."

Harry closed his eyes briefly, dispelling the terrible visions; he did not want to deal with and exhaled loudly, "Thank you love."

It the better part of an hour but when the eight individuals emerged form the pensieve, they were all white faced and severely shaken.

"Mr. Potter..." Amelia said unable to go on as she stared at him in shock, "I wish my Aurors had half the courage you've displayed since your first year."

Dora was sniffing quietly and Remus, Sirius, Ragnok, Griphook and the other two goblins looked on with a sallow expression.

Harry for his part, scooped up his memories and turned to address Ragnok, "Have you come to a decision about the placement of Hermione and myself."

"Yes Duke Evans, quite easily, you two are far more qualified that many of the previous members we've had over the years." He looked to his companions for confirmation and after receiving it he turned to the two youths, "Seeing your feats over the past years, including your Ms. Granger, we award the two of you membership as full-fledged Night Foxes."

Harry nodded curtly and they all took their seats.

"Now that we are all members here, I would like to introduce my companions, this is Griphook, he is the Clan Major of his Clan and is willing to participate in our organization. Parthesage," he said indicating to one of the other two goblins Harry didn't recognize, "is the Clan Minor of one of the most powerful Goblin clans of Tookna. Finally, Talatu, is the Clan Heir to the Goblin Clan of Royalty."

The three goblins stood and bowed at their introductions and were welcomed pleasantly by the group.

"Their influence shall be imperative should the need arise for goblin involvement in a war." Ragnok continued, "Right now, it would be prudent to shorten this meeting till here. Our main agenda is to gather more members and begin branching out to save magical creatures and Muggleborn witches and wizards in need of help."

He stepped off the front of the podium and headed down to Madame Bones, handing her a file, "since the Night Foxes are not organized enough to handle all these missions themselves, we would like to hand off these files to you Madame Bones and ask you to take action regarding these cases of abuse in Muggleborn households."

Madame Bones was surprised to see such a thick file and promised to act immediately.

"How did you gather this information Master Goblin?" Amelia was surprised by the detail and precision of the files.

"Goblins' intelligence has its own way of acting Madame." Ragnok politely answered flashing her a toothy grin.

"Werewolf Lupin and Auror Black-Tonks, I feel you two would be able to handle the cases of abuse for these magical creatures in distress while the other half will be handled by the goblins." He said dividing the thicker file in two parts and giving each half to their relevant parties.

"With that I adjourn this meeting of the Night Foxes." Ragnok said finally.

As everyone was leaving Ragnok held Harry and Hermione behind, "I wish to speak to the two of you privately."

"Is it urgent Ragnok?" Hermione asked worriedly.

"Not desperately but I would like to warn you. Right now, you are safe but once term commences, you will be in grave danger under the watch of the Headmaster. He will try to control you like he has always done. I suggest extreme caution and perhaps even abandoning Hogwarts in favour of a better schooling." Ragnok said seriously, "the Goblin Nation would be honoured to train the young Master and Ms. Granger."

Harry considered Ragnok's words and promised to give him a definitive reply once they were safer.

The rest of the summer passed by in a breeze. Hermione and Harry had completely thrown themselves into NEWT preparation, as they had mastered all the content for their OWLs. Harry had even begun to train Hermione in the art of Occlumency as his secrets needed to be protected even in her mind. To Hermione's immense pleasure and Harry's unbelievable chagrin Hermione seemed to have a knack for Occlumency and her shield were as strong as his own in two weeks' time. Even Remus was impressed and he expressed his pleasure at having the honour of teaching a student as able as Hermione again.

Hermione also devoted a lot of their time to drafting lesson plans for the DA and they were sure that Harry would be able to shape up several future war heroes well in advance.

Yet Harry's favourite part was their meeting with Rita Skeeter a few days after the first Night Foxes meeting.

Flashback

Rita walked into the Leaky Cauldron with her head held high and looked around nervously for her employers. She did not know who had Owled her, the letter only stated that they were going to start a new newspaper and they wanted her to be a part of it. After having promised the annoying Bushy-Know-it-all she wouldn't write for the Daily Prophet, funds had been low and difficult to come by.

When Rita asked Tom, the bartender, of the compatriots of The Howler, Tom politely guided her to a secretive backroom. Upon entering the room Rita was shocked to see her new employers.

"Hello Rita, its quite pleasant to see you again." Said the previously mentioned Bushy-Know-it-all.

"Is this some kind of twisted joke?" Rita said menacingly. "I guarantee you I have nothing more to do with articles on Potter, there are enough writers out there to soil his name."

Hermione glared at her and Harry spoke up to protect the foolish beetle. "We are aware Rita. We are here with a business proposal. We are going to start a new paper, The Howler, as I'm sure was indicated in the letter. It is going to be more of an information leaflet only to grow as it gathers followers, which it will. Through this paper, I want to present the truth of what is happening in the Wizarding world, all of it."

Rita considered his words and immediately headed into reporter mode, "How much will I be paid? What kind of reporters are you looking for? Who is the editor and what are the terms and conditions?"

"Delving right into the heart of it I see," Hermione said jokingly but Rita glared at her, "Your salary shall be determined based upon your level of commitment and involvement. You will also be the Head Investigative Reporter and any information you may come by using... alternative means is to be screened by the editor before being approved. You will also be paid extra for every good reporter you manage to get involved into the paper. The rules are simple: all your articles are to be screened and approved by the editor, you must not lie in any of them nor must you print misleading facts. Also your employment must be a complete secret as it is going to be a highly inflammatory paper, I suggest you come up with a decent alias. Furthermore, an oath of secrecy of the paper's contents and owners. You will be the only person involved in the paper who will be aware that Harry Potter is the owner of the newspaper other than the editor himself." Hermione concluded.

Rita snorted, "you actually think people are going to buy the rubbish he's been spouting about He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named?"

"Yes, I do and you are going to convince them." Said Hermione undeterred.

Who is this elusive editor, "he's not well known in the Journalist industries but his skills will be more than satisfactory. His name is Fellow Perseus Willow, originally from Scotland."

Rita looked pensive for a moment before breathing deeply, "I will give you a final answer after my pay I decided."

"150 galleons an article with bonuses depending upon the quality of the work on the discretion of the editor and 100 galleons per 'acceptable' reporter you hire." Harry said knowing he had won her over when he saw Rita's eyes bulge out into dollar signs.

"When do I sign the papers?"

End Flashback

Needless to say, The Howler was just as Hermione described it, a howler! Their opening leaflet had been sent to every person in Magical Britain with an extra sheet for them to fill it out for subscription. The subscription levels itself had been astronomical after the opening article The Boy-Who-Lived speaks the Truth by Lady Beetle. The response was unbelievable!

Sirius, or his new alias Perseus Willow was swamped with keeping the press going. The one article itself had started a trend and now all their issues had to meet the levels of expectancy.

The Ministry of Magic was in disarray as things began to fall apart as wizard after wizard turned up in the Ministry demanding answers for missing people.

While Daily Prophet and the Ministry condemned The Howler, the popularity of the new paper only tripled as more people were interested in hearing of its truths. In only a matter of a month, what started off as an information leaflet with a single article of the Boy-Who-Lived, now grew into a 12-page newspaper sent out everyday. The number of reporters working for the paper increased from one (Rita Skeeter) to 50 in three weeks and only 10 had been employed by Rita (to her dismay).

The Ministry was trying to find the editor of the paper and were running helter-skelter. They even went so far as to apprehend some reporters but the reporters all stated that most of the articles they wrote were based on information gathered by a special group of informants and they weren't involved in the investigative parts of the journalistic work at all.

The articles brought to light each and every case of muggleborn abuse they could get their hands on (which was a lot thanks to the goblins). Whenever Voldemort struck from the shadows, it didn't

miss the radar of The Howler and was in the very next issue of the paper. The paper certainly turned the tables round for Harry was no longer the crazy, delinquent, attention-seeking brat made out to be by the Daily Prophet while the Ministry was represented as the epitome of secrecy and deceit. Fudge was dubbed the Bumbling Moron and a vote of no-confidence was urged in the Wizengamot by the paper.

Yes, things were definitely looking up for one Harry Potter as he packed his belongings and was ready to go back to Hogwarts. He was ready for his tests in Arithmancy and Ancient Runes; he had in fact received the Prefect's position after a long, emotionally drawn out letter to McGonagall and was in much better shape to start the DA.

The trip to school was relatively uneventful, NOT!

As soon as Harry and Hermione got onto the train, angry redheaded Weasleys who Harry had nearly completely forgotten about after more than a month of separation bombarded them. Ron immediately apologized on his mother's behalf and Ginny wrenched her way in between Harry and Hermione and smiled genially at Harry.

Harry was writhing in frustration and mentally tabulating their chances at finishing the entire Horcrux hunt without Ron, he liked to admit that their chances were pretty good without the redheaded buffoon.

"Harry and I need to go to the Prefect's meeting, we'll see you later guys." Hermione said after they put away their belongings in a compartment.

"Oh, right... okay." Was Ron's only reply and Harry wanted to botch the annoying git in the head for being the jealous prat that he was.

The Prefect meeting was quite uneventful. The prefects were the same from the last time around (except for Harry) and Malfoy was seething at him from a distance.

Malfoy... That struck a cord. Malfoy didn't voluntarily want to be a death eater or let in those death eaters to kill Dumbledore. He never wanted all of that but was forced into it because of familial pressure. As much as Harry hated the little ferret, he had to admit that after

growing up among the insufferable death eaters themselves, could he expect Malfoy to be any different if Malfoy wanted to survive his home?

Maybe Harry could help Malfoy come to the conclusion that he isn't death eater material earlier on this time round, but that would be another project in the pipeline.

Harry was brought out of his musing as the meeting ended and Hermione and Harry had taken first rounds of the train. The rounds ended uneventfully and after telling off two Slytherin fourth-years for rude hand gestures, Hermione and Harry headed back to their compartment.

As they entered, they were met with the unfamiliar gathering of Luna Lovegood, Neville Longbottom and the infamous redheads.

"Heya Harry, Hermione!" Neville said jovially.

Harry smiled remembering his last memory of Neville before he was whisked back into time, Neville had single-handedly broken out of Voldemort's body-bind and pulled out the Sword of Gryffindor and chopped off Nagini's head. He was going to harness that courage far earlier this time round.

"Hey Neville!" Harry said happily.

Hermione too greeted him and settled down beside him to talk about Herbology. Harry understood her subtle buffer to allow him time to speak to Luna, he had already told Hermione about Luna's unbelievable courage and devotion and the two of them had promised each other to make things better for her this time round.

Harry flopped down beside Luna, blatantly avoiding the seat being offered by Ginny and Ron who looked livid that he had chosen 'Loony' Lovegood over them.

"Hi Luna!"

A pair of protuberant blue eyes lifted from her copy of The Quibbler and stared surprised at him.

"Hello Harry Potter." Luna said dreamily, she then turned to Ginny and said, "You have a heavy infestation of Nargles, they will do you a lot of damage Ginny." Luna said serenely.

Harry couldn't help himself, he burst out laughing and Ginny turned tomato red.

"Well you know what Luna-" But Harry cut her off.

"That was amazingly funny Luna! What else are you reading in there?" He said pointing to The Quibbler.

"It's a Galadian Pyramid design by the ancient Norwegians, if you stare at it upside-down, you can see the Crumple-horned Snorkack!" She said, happy that someone was interested in her knowledge.

"Wow, where are these creatures found Luna?" Harry said peering over her shoulder and staring at the image of the inverted pyramid. He was surprised but he did see the odd creature.

"They don't exist Harry." Ginny said dismissively and Luna's happiness faded to be replaced by a mask of cool serenity.

"I beg to differ Ginny, its right there, I see it." Luna whipped her head to look at Harry in surprise and smiled the widest smile he had ever seen on the girl.

Harry smiled back.

The rest of the train ride passed in earnest with Hermione and Neville deeply discussing Herbology and Harry was certain he saw the flush of excitement sparkling on both of them as they discussed the fascinating subject.

He spoke to Luna about the various creatures she knew about and Luna was surprisingly knowledgeable and as usual blatantly honest.

When Ron came to ask Harry (for the fifth time) to play chess or exploding snap, Luna finally looked at Ron coolly and said as dreamily as possible, "If he was interested Ronald, he would have possibly agreed when you first asked. However, by making the same request of someone over and over again after their rejection is simply making them feel awkward and yourself appear desperate. I

would humbly suggest you try a different tactic for Harry here looks quite distraught with your repeated attempts to garner his attention. In fact, I would say that you're rather jealous he isn't interested in you, I never thought of you as homosexual Ronald, though are you?" Luna said all of this so fast that Ron barely got any of it and stared dumbly at her.

"What! I mean... Uh... Yeah..." Was his highly thought out and intelligent response.

Harry, Hermione and Neville burst out laughing and his face turned as red as Ginny's when Luna spoke to her.

"Shut up Loony!" he said angrily, "At least I have friends!"

Luna looked undeterred but Harry could see Ron had hurt her where it hurt most.

This Harry would not allow.

"Wonder what you're on about Ron?" He said trying to keep the edge off his voice, "Luna has friends, at least me. Whatever we've spoken today, I would certainly love to have her as my friend and I'm sure Hermione would agree, right love?"

Hermione nodded and smiled at Luna who despite her mask of dreaminess had shining eyes.

"You... WHAT!" Spluttered Ron.

"Just sit down Ron before you make an even bigger fool of yourself and I have to discipline you like last time." Hermione said with a not-so-veiled threat.

That got Ron's attention and he scampered off to sit beside Ginny with a hand placed protectively on his crotch.

Harry turned back to Luna and they continued speaking, though Harry couldn't help but notice the bounce in Luna's step as she carried the conversation onward.

Yes things were definitely looking up...

The Opening Feast was just as before, 'Umbitch' gave the same speech word for word. Harry gazed at her with a calculating look in his eye, he had a plan and it was going to unfold brilliantly.

Thankfully that night Seamus didn't pick a fight with him, though he did look at him wearily but didn't say anything. Random people would come up to Harry and congratulate him for surviving and that they never lost faith in him in the first place. They have complete faith in him and The Howler and they never believed for a second what the rag of the Daily Prophet had to say.

Harry thanked them for their faith while internally rolling his eyes for most of these people most certainly had no faith in him the first time round when there was no Howler.

Time passed and Harry was attending his first DADA lesson with Umbitch.

"Good morning class." She said in her sickly sweet voice.

The class gave a muffled response.

"Now-now that won't do now will it?" She said mock-reproachfully. Harry was cringing internally, "When I say good morning to you, I want you to greet me as well."

Everyone perked up and said as one, "Good morning Professor Umbridge."

She smiled widely (toadily), "Now that's better..."

"Please turn to Chapter One of your ministry-approved texts and study the first chapter. Wand away now." Everyone looked confused but complied and after 10 minutes of bored reading they looked at her with hate-filled looks as she smiled on happily.

She studiously avoided Hermione's raised hand for 10 minutes but like last time when Hermione gathered everyone's attention, she could avoid Hermione no longer.

"Yes Ms..." She said uncertainly, the smile fading from her thin lips.

"Granger Professor, Hermione Granger. I was wondering if we would be learning anything about using defensive spells?" She said calmly.

"Using spells! Whatever would school children like yourself need to use spells for?" Umbitch said with mock incredulity, "You will be taught defensive theory in a controlled, safe environment."

Hermione raised her hand again and Umbridge called on her

"Professor, the OWLs have a practical portion to them, if we don't practice the spells, how would we ever learn them?"

"If you study the theory thoroughly, you will be fine Ms. Granger." She said the smile fading from her lips but Hermione looked disgruntled and this was Harry's cue.

Harry raised his hand and Umbridge stared at him sharply.

Hermione and the rest of the class also regarded him carefully but didn't dare utter a word.

"Mr. Potter?" muttered the Umbitch.

"It's Duke Evans-Potter-Black-Lupin Professor." Harry said calmly.

"Excuse me?" Umbridge said flabbergasted.

"I mean no disrespect, I'm simply saying that since I refer to you with your formal title in this formal classroom environment, it is your duty as per school guidelines to refer to me in a formal fashion which by Wizarding customs involved my last name and title if present."

Umbridge looked visibly shaken but Harry didn't let the mask of innocence leave his face for minute as everyone shook in laughter.

"Well Duke Evans-Potter-Black-Lupin, what is it that you wish to ask?"

"Simply Professor Umbridge why aren't you following the school rules and Ministry instituted guidelines which clearly stipulate that core subjects of schooling curriculum – Transfiguration, Herbology, Charms, Potions and Defensive Against the Dark Arts – are to have

at least half of every class period of practical assessment in order to best prepare students for their examinations whether OWL or NEWT-level." Harry said this all in one breath and Umbridge stared at him angrily.

"Are you telling me I am not following the rules?" Umbridge said venomously.

"Heavens no Professor, I am simply asking whether you plan on disregarding that rule as it was instituted for the betterment of the students. Also if you do then I suspect you have the express permission of Education Ministry Head, Madame Griselda Marchbanks' permission to do so, which you will, no doubt present to classes to clarify any future questions." Harry said sweetly, in the same sickly voice.

"I-I..." Umbridge spluttered.

"I assume you have not in that case." Harry said frowning, "Well Professor as you've so eloquently stated that you believe in the rules, we as a class whole-heartedly support the Ministry in this endeavour. We will uphold the rules by practicing defensive magic until you obtain permission from Madame Marchbanks to do otherwise, isn't that right class?" Harry said turning to everyone.

Most of the students (including at least half of the Slytherins) yelled in agreement.

Hermione stood up beaming at Harry and turned to Umbridge, "The spell in Chapter 1 is the stunner: Stupefy. Should we pair up and practice?" Hermione asked innocently.

"I think-" But Harry cut her off.

"Of course not Hermione!" Harry said in mock indignation, "This is a very difficult spell and Madame Umbridge will teach it to us herself so that we know how it works, am I right Professor?" Umbridge nodded mutely, not understanding how she reached this position.

"I volunteer myself to be the partner of the esteemed Madame Under-Secretary." Harry said with heavy sarcasm and everyone giggled.

He stood up in front of Umbridge and bowed with his wand drawn.

Umbridge whipped out her wand and said to the class, "Watch and learn. Duke Evans-Potter-Black-Lupin, defend yourself." She said as she screamed in her shrill voice, "Stupefy!"

Harry smirked as the red light came hurtling towards him and he silently cast a special reflexive shield Hermione had taught him during their horcrux hunt.

The red stunner bounced off his shield and rebounded upon Umbitch whose triumphant grin faded instantly and she fell to the ground in an unceremonious heap.

As she fell unconscious, the entire class burst out laughing and Harry had to bite his lip to laugh himself.

He evverted Umbitch and she stared at him first dazed and then confusedly, followed by embarrassment and then raw anger.

"I'm sorry Professor, you probably didn't see it coming is all. Maybe next time?" He said offering his arm to help her up.

She looked like she was about to give him his infamous detention as she took his arm to stand up but the bell rang at that fated moment and Harry let her fall back to the ground as he withdrew his hand.

She fell to the ground again with a noticeable 'thump' and Harry stepped over, picked his bag, held Hermione's hand and walked out saying over his shoulder, "Until next time Professor, this class was fun!"

Like? Don't like? Drop a REVIEW!

Don't forget to vote for Ron's future on my homepage

Next Chapter: DA first lesson, a talking-to with Draco, the first Harry-Hermione relationship fight because of Luna(?). Angsty.

Until next time,

Kisses,

~ Gatonio

Chapter 9

All is Fair in Love and War

September turned to October and October to November.

Harry and Hermione bided their time and waited for the right moment to start the DA.

Umbridge was completely destroyed in her Defence Against the Dark Arts classes as after the incident with Harry became public knowledge, students openly questioned her right to ban practical applications of spells and she was left helpless.

When she approached Madame Griselda Marchbanks for permission to repeal the rule, she was shot down with some angry comments. Of course, The Howler was spreading all over the school and magical Britain giving blow by blow details of Umbridge's failures as a teacher. Even some pureblood families were troubled by the lack of good teaching and appealed to have her removed for someone more suitable.

Such was the state of Umbridge's affairs the day before she was declared Hogwarts High Inquisitor and Harry had through The Howler completely desiccated the warm and luxurious praise she got from the Prophet.

Within days the halls of the Ministry of Magic were flooded with angry parents demanding justification and Fudge was left fumbling like a goldfish caught out of water. When Madame Bones herself descended on Fudge with all her fury, Umbridge's position was repealed. She remained the Inquisitor for a total of two days.

Yet her ineptitude had greatly worried many students and by November, people were openly rebuking her and thinking of ways to arrange for private help.

Harry smirked when he overheard a similar conversation between Susan Bones and Hannah Abbott who were discussing how they were being tutored in defence over winter break.

That evening Harry approached Hermione as she sat by the fireplace reading and said, "Its time."

Hermione jumped of her seat and kissed Harry soundly, "Finally." She said.

The very next day Harry made his way to Professor McGonagall's office, "Professor may I have a word?" He asked politely.

McGonagall smiled genially at her student who had finally taken to his mother. He had performed a feat she deemed impossible even for Lily Evans by mastering everything there was to learn about Ancient Runes and Arithmancy in one summer. Needless to say he had passed without trouble. In fact he was excelling in all of his classes if her reports held true, even Severus was having a hard time tripping him up now.

"Yes Mr. Potter?" She said curtly keeping up her strict and formal façade.

"I was wondering Professor if I could start a club for defence?" Harry asked innocently, giving her a full-blown puppy-dog look.

McGonagall couldn't resist but with a Herculean effort she asked, "Why do you seek the need for starting a defence club Mr. Potter?"

"Well Professor, many of the students, including myself, are... disturbed... by Professor Umbridge's method of teaching, she is incapable of explaining most of the theory that she assigns us to read and cannot perform most of the spells either. In light of this, a defence club would be great for students to be well-versed with the practical aspect of defensive training so they're prepared for whatever's out there." He concluded his little spiel with so much innocence that he was sure he would get an Oscar for his performance.

McGonagall nodded thoughtfully and said, "Although I never allow slander of my colleagues in front of me, I am disheartened to say that I agree with you and fully sanction your club, who will be heading it?"

Harry smiled, he loved when plans worked out for the best, "I will be Professor."

She looked at him a bit surprised, "What makes you think you can prepare students for heavy defence as you promise?"

"I faced Voldemort himself in my first year as a disjointed part of a Professor, I then killed a Basilisk in my second year, helped an escaped convict escape again on a hippogriff in my third, fought a dragon, merpeople and acromantula in a competition I did not want to be a part of and finally saw Voldemort resurrect himself and still lived to tell the tale. I think I have some skills." Harry said a bit icily.

McGonagall looked at him surprised and nodded her head, "I... I never thought about all the things you've had to face..."

"To be honest Professor, as my Head of House, it was your duty to care for me but you didn't, and I hold nothing against you for your lack of aptitude. It is a necessary evil with inefficient people."

McGonagall looked at him sharply, "five points from Gryffindor Mr. Potter for insulting a teacher."

"I see no insult Professor, I said the truth. If that is an insult to you maybe you should reconsider how high you rate yourself." He turned around and before stepping out of the door he said, "Thank you for sanctioning this and I will be asking Professor Flitwick to sponsor this club."

McGonagall sat heavily back in her chair as she reviewed the past five years in her mind, every year her little Lion had faced unquestionable challenges and he succeeded every time, but she had never even stopped to consider how he was coping or dealing with this. She had failed... Potter was right... McGonagall arched her back considerably and decided to have a long, overdue talking-to with the esteemed Headmaster, this is as far as she would let things slip.

Harry marched back to his room after speaking to Flitwick who had been ecstatic to join in the defence club.

Once in the common room, Harry pinned the advertisement Hermione had made for their Defence Association on the Common 'Common Room' Bulletin with a huge space for sign up.

It indicated that a Defence Association headed by Harry Potter and Hermione Granger would be starting for anyone between the years 4 to 7 and would be sponsored by Professor Flitwick.

He then walked out of the Common Room and made his way to the Lake where he was going to meet Luna. Over the past few months he had developed a deep friendship with the Ravenclaw girl. He stood up for her, fought for her and nearly even got the entire Ravenclaw House expelled when he forced her to talk about her problems to her Head of House. Professor Flitwick was enraged to say the least, he had never seen the tiny man exude so much anger. Needless to say, the Ravenclaws, the cream of the school, the smart and studious rule-followers were given the punishment of their lifetimes. Those who confessed to have bullied Luna were given six weeks of detention with Filch and 30 points from Ravenclaw apiece. Those who had not confessed were eventually caught one after the other and given detention with Filch and Snape for the rest of the year with 50 points from Ravenclaw apiece. To Harry's intense surprise and horror, Cho was not only one of the girls that tormented poor Luna, but had been heading the bullying since Luna's first year.

Yes, Luna Lovegood's life had changed considerably for the better since she shared a compartment with Harry Potter on the train.

As Luna sat under her favourite tree waiting for Harry to come down and join her, she thought about all the things that he had done for her. Every time she thought of him, there was a tense knot in her stomach and she felt herself blushing. Normally, she was cool and dreamy, seeing that as an easy escape to being the little, courted girl that she was. No matter how much she tried to deny it, she was taken with Harry Potter and didn't know what to do about it.

'He definitely cares for me...' She thought absently, fighting with herself in this never-ending struggle, 'But he is so close to Hermione... Though he never really touches her or acts like there's anything going on there. They've always been close friends. He does feel something for me, for sure... He's always around, always taking care of me, always knowing exactly what to say... he does love me... That's the only answer.'

Luna straightened herself and brought the dreamy façade to full force when she heard Harry greeting her and sitting down beside her.

She smiled at him and deftly prevented the blush from rising to her cheeks when he smiled his brilliant smile at her.

"Hello Harry." She said distantly.

"Lovely to see you Luna." He said kissing her cheek and winking.

Luna smiled genuinely, letting her mask slip and she smiled at Harry with all her heart.

Harry loved to see Luna smile, it made her so real, instead of the dreamy look she always kept up. He loved he could make her feel comfortable enough to drop her mask if only temporarily.

"Tell me something Harry." She started hesitantly.

"Yes Luna?" He said kindly.

"Do you... would you... Is it possible that..." She sighed deeply, she had to get a hang on things; this was getting out of control.

Harry looked deeply in her protuberant blue eyes as she stared at the Hogwarts Lake, observing the crystal-like beauty of the shinning water.

"Harry, would you mind terrible if I did something?" Luna said still not looking at him.

Harry just smirked and asked cheekily, "Oh and what would that be?" He wiggled his eyebrows as Luna looked at him and saw what momentarily left him speechless. Luna was blushing in a very-girly, un-Luna-like way.

"Um... Luna?" Was all he could manage as Luna Lovegood wrapped her arms around Harry Potter's neck and kissed him soundly. She pressed her lips to his and held on for dear life as she desperately kissed the man she thought she loved.

Harry for his part was effectively shocked and didn't even realize he was responding to Luna's kiss. He was a honourable man and loved Hermione deeply but at the end of the day, he was a hormonal lad and didn't quite know what he was doing or getting himself into.

As their lips moulded and Harry deepened the kiss, the rational part of his brain screaming at him to stop, completely shut off and another part of his body began to act up and control his actions.

Harry and Luna kissed as they twirled on the grass, their tongues lashing for control and Harry finally realized that what he was doing was wrong; he had promised himself to another.

He stopped completely but Luna didn't even notice as she lost herself in the kiss.

Harry calmly pulled her off him and said, "I'm sorry Luna that was a mistake. I shouldn't have... We shouldn't have..."

"What do you mean Harry? You kissed me back... You can't deny there's something in your heart for me." She said in a monotone, her dreaminess coming up in full force to hide her sadness that was slowly ripping her heart apart.

"Yes Harry, what do you mean? You did kiss her back?" Came a strangled, accusing voice from the bushes.

A bushy haired girl, with deep hazel eyes that were burning with tears emerged and she stood in front of Harry with her arms crossed.

"Hermione... I... I..." He spluttered incoherently.

Hermione raised her hand to silence him and turned to Luna, "I do not blame you in the slightest Luna. I was coming down here to join the two of you as you studied but I got to see something totally different. We kept it hidden from everyone that we were dating for my safety but I don't think that thought even crossed his mind as he kissed you in broad daylight for anyone to see."

Luna looked at Harry with sharp, blue eyes, all dreaminess gone, "You've been dating her and you still kissed me back."

Harry bowed his head in defeat, "I don't know what I was thinking, hell I don't even know if I was thinking in the first place."

He turned to Luna in desperation and said, "Luna, you are very important to me and I do love you. As much as I'd like to say that I

love you as a brother like I convinced myself before, I'm wrong, I love you like I love Hermione, you are and always will be very near and dear to my heart. But I love Hermione to the point of no return. If she left me, I would die Luna, no questions asked. I'm sorry for giving you the wrong idea."

He then turned to Hermione, got on his feet without breaking eye contact and hesitantly took her arm, "I'm sorry love, I made a mistake... It will never ever happen again."

Hermione snatched her arm away from him, she took several calming breaths and said, "You just kissed another girl in front of me, claimed that you love her and now want me to act as if nothing happened?"

"Hermione I..." He began his apology only to be stopped.

SLAP!

Harry's cheek burnt with the red remnant of Hermione's Granger's anger. Hermione finally let the tears fall turning away from him and walking away without another word.

Harry sat down dejectedly on the grass and looked on Hermione's retreating form, Luna followed suit.

"My my, I really have gotten you in a pickle haven't I?" She said sadly.

Harry waved his hand as if expending her apology, "It wasn't your fault Luna."

Luna sighed, "Of course it wasn't. But pity you love her, you are a really good kisser."

Harry looked at her surprised but Luna was unfazed.

"You love me Harry, but you love her more. I can live with that. I know that if ever she weren't in your life, you and I would have a future, which is good to know. I wasn't rejected, just not perfectly suited to you." She shrugged her shoulders and smiled easily.

Harry cracked a grin at her and shook his head in amusement, "Ah Luna... You never cease to amaze me."

Luna shrugged again as she got up and Harry got up too, "Give her time and perhaps a gesture that you love her and are sorry. She'll come around, she loves you too much to ignore you." Luna happily turned and was about to skip away when she turned one last time to face Harry.

Harry stopped in his tracks as he nearly bumped into Luna and they were inches apart.

Before he could stutter an apology Luna closed the gap between them and kissed him for a few seconds.

She broke away from him and licked her lips, "Yes, a wonderful kisser. Hermione sure is a lucky girl."

Harry just stared at her flabbergasted and muttered incoherently.

Luna waved her hand in a very similar way Harry waved his when she tried to apologize to him, "Think nothing of it, it was simply confirmation, so I know how good a kisser the next one should be if he wants to take your place in my heart as a lover."

Harry simply stared on as he watched Luna skip away, thinking intently how weird that girl truly was.

In Ravenclaw Tower nobody dared to bother Luna Lovegood at this point. When she came in, she was skipping like her usual self but as she got into her room, they heard a loud, wailing sound. Luna was sad and angry (based on the sound of things shattering in the room) and nobody dared to tempt her.

Luna fell on her knees as she looked around at the debris surrounding her, everything and every belonging she ever had was shattered in pieces around her. Luna was perched frustrated on her knees in the centre of this mass destruction as she reviewed the carnage neutrally with red, puffy eyes and tear-stained cheeks.

She sighed and waved her wand putting everything back in place before she headed to the bathroom to clean her face. As she looked in the mirror she traced her lips where she had kissed Harry, then

she violently brushed her teeth to get his sweet taste out of her mouth.

As she settled into bed for what she knew would be a troubled sleep she mused to herself, 'Mum was right, first love hurts like a bitch when it ends.'

Harry had tried fruitlessly all day yesterday to get Hermione to forgive him, or even to notice him. Yet when she herself kicked him out of the Library, he was running out of options. He did the best thing any man in his position would do: he ran to his closest female friend to ask for advice only to stop and remember that his closest female friend was the one insanely angry with him. He sighed and thought before coming up with another tactic.

Harry went down to the Great Hall for dinner and sat down beside Hermione who was deftly ignoring him, immersing herself in a book. Seamus and Lavender were sitting across from them and looking oddly between Harry's forlorn expression directed at Hermione and Hermione's angry determination, avoiding him completely. Seamus and Lavender looked at each other uncertainly and shrugged, it wasn't their business after all.

Harry sighed and looked at the two in front of him, a plan refining in his mind.

"Hey guys." He said jovially.

"Hey Harry." Lavender said kindly.

"Hey there mate." Seamus replied.

Harry sighed dramatically when Hermione still continued to ignore him.

"Something wrong Harry?" Lavender asked curiously.

Ka-ching! Thought Harry.

"Well, now that you mention it, so much is so wrong... I guess I am the world's biggest idiot." He said pretend-dejectedly.

"Why mate? What happened?" Seamus asked inquisitively.

"Well... There was this girl..." Harry just let that statement hang and saw some very amusing reactions.

Hermione slammed her book shut and looked at Harry murderously, finally giving him some attention. Lavender's eyebrows shot above her head and questions were rising to her lips by the millisecond. Seamus just looked dumbstruck and stuttered.

"A girl...?" Seamus asked.

"Is it that impossible for a fifteen-year-old to like girl Seamus? Or do you think I bat for the other team?" he asked good-naturedly.

Seamus broke into a mischievous grin, "Oh you would know, now wouldn't you?"

Harry and Seamus wiggled their eyebrows at each other suggestively till Lavender squatted Seamus' arm and started her volley of questions, "What girl? Who is she? Is she a Gryffindor? Our year? Is she your friend?"

Harry felt Hermione grip his arm under the table in warning (more like a threat) so Harry swayed his head dramatically, "Sorry no can do Lavender. I can't tell anyone till she forgives me. I made a huge, huge mistake and even after apologizing a million times, I can't make her forgive me. Any ideas?"

Lavender huffed in disappointment but realized it wasn't an explicit 'no', just a 'not yet'.

"Well, if I ever got really, really angry with my boy, he'd have to do something grand, specially for me, to make it up to me." Lavender said knowledgeably, "What about you Hermione?"

She looked at Hermione pointedly, who was unusually silent for a conversation involving Harry not getting something. If someone had taken the heart of Harry Potter, she was one of the prime suspects.

"Well... I would say... You should give her time... let her figure things out and make herself believe that you really are sorry." Hermione said not meeting Harry's eye.

Lavender sighed, "oh please Hermione, wasn't it you who talked about the big, white wedding, muggle style. The one who talked of her guy taking you by the arm and showing you off to the world like his greatest treasure? You're a big romantic and don't you deny it!"

Hermione blushed maroon and Harry nearly melted seeing her blush like that. He also mentally berated himself for not even trying to realize what Hermione wanted in a relationship. She was always, always there for him, unquestioningly, even against her better judgement. But was he ever there for her? Did he ever do anything for her? Well, things were about to change.

Hermione mumbled something about homework and left hurriedly and Harry turned to Lavender and Seamus grinning wildly. He had the perfect idea.

"Thanks guys, I think I know the best course of action." He said clapping his hands in finality.

"Well, who is it though?" Seamus asked sincerely.

"You'll know tomorrow at breakfast. In fact, spread the word around, Hogwarts will have its best attended breakfast tomorrow."

Before Harry even got up from his seat, Lavender squealed and said she had to find Parvati and something about all things females needed to know. She left and Harry followed suit at a leisurely pace. He quietly made his way down to the kitchens and shared a few words with the elves. He then proceeded to Fred and George who smiled knowingly when he told them about his plans regarding a certain bushy-beauty. The rest of the evening was spent in planning their assault on one Hermione Granger who would have to forgive Harry.

When Harry went to bed that night, he was nervous but determined, after all, he would do anything for his love to accept him back, come what may!

The next morning Harry got up early and made his way to breakfast much before even some of the teachers. He had some last minute preparations to do and would not have anything bungle up his perfect plan.

An hour later, an unusually large number of students came straddling in for breakfast. To Harry's intense surprise, even Ron was up early and was eyeing him warily. But he didn't give the youngest Weasley male any thought, today was all about Hermione. Harry waited tentatively, tapping his left foot impatiently as Hermione had still not appeared. Around thirty minutes before class started, nearly the entire school was present and there was some tension in the air. If Harry hadn't been so nervous, he would've wondered why McGonagall and Sprout were giving him encouraging smiles. The Gryffindor Gossip Queens did have far-reaching effects.

Finally, Hermione walked into the Great Hall cautiously, surprised by the unusually large crowd in the morning and increasingly nervous because all the talking died down as she made her way to the Gryffindor table beside Lavender who promptly covered the extra space between Parvati and her and forced Hermione to stay standing.

Harry nodded to Fred and George who waved their wands discreetly and music flared in the Great Hall. From somewhere in the background, a beautiful melody started playing that Harry knew was from Hermione's favourite musical, Moulin Rouge.

Harry stood at the head of the table and Hermione looked at him questioningly from the other end. Everyone in the Great Hall stared at the two with bated breath as the music escalated and then all the girls swooned.

Harry Potter sang, and he was brilliant!

Never knew, I could feel like this,

Like I'd never seen the sky before.

Hermione's mouth fell open along with several hundred others and Harry took a steady step towards her.

Want to vanish inside your kiss,

Everyday I love you, more and more.

There were collective sighs of "awww"'s from the girls and muted shock from the boys.

Listen to my heart

Can you hear it sing?

Telling me to give you

E-very-thing!

Harry splayed his arms wide and increased his pace towards Hermione who just stared at him in shock.

Seasons may change,

Winter to spring.

But I love you

Until the end... of... time...

He stopped halfway through Gryffindor table and looked at Hermione with all the love and sincerity he could muster.

Come what may...

Come what may...

I will love you...

Until my dying day...

There was a huge pause when he just stood there waiting for Hermione. He lowered his hands when she made no move to walk towards him as every eye in the Great Hall was fixated on him and his lonely disposition. She hadn't forgiven him...

What the hell was he thinking, dragging her into this kind of thing? She probably didn't even want to be the head of the attention. Of all people, he should know how terrible that feels. Stupid! Stupid! Stupid!

He turned away from her and his head bowed. Then he heard the voice that sounded sweeter than all music singing to him. He turned and located the source, Hermione...

Suddenly the world seems such a perfect place,

Suddenly it moves with such a perfect grace.

He joined her, seeing her slight anxiety and nervousness of singing in front of all these people.

Suddenly my life doesn't seem such a waste.

She held her hand up silencing him,

It all revolves around you...

There were tears shining in both their eyes as they let the weight of those words settle down and when they recommenced singing, it was with a newfound vigour and love.

And there's no mountain too high...

No river too wide...

Sing out this song and I'll be there...

By your side...

Hermione started walking towards Harry and he raised his arms to envelop her.

Storm clouds may gather,

And storms may collide.

She kissed him, a chaste kiss but full of meaning and Harry sang triumphantly with her repeating his words.

(H)- But I love you...

(Hr)- I love you...

(H)-Until the end...

(Hr)- Until the end...

(H&Hr)- of... time...

They looked at each other and as they sang.

Come what may...

Come what may...

I will love you...

Until my dying day...

They kissed again and the Great Hall burst with flowers. Thousands of lilies, daffodils, roses, tulips and daisies of all colours fell from the ceiling and house elves appeared in the room in sync with the music and sang in the background as Harry and Hermione looked at each other to sing one last time.

(H&Hr) Oh come what may...

(Elves) Come what may...

(H&Hr) I will looooooveeee you...

(Hr)- I will love you

(Hr)- Suddenly the world seems such a perfect place...

(H&Hr)- Come what may...

(Elves)- Come what may...

(H&Hr)- Come what may...

(Elves)- Come what may...

(H&Hr)- I will love you...

(H&Hr)- Until my dying daaaaaaay...

As the song reached its finale, another burst of flowers fell just above Harry and Hermione as they kissed one last time in front of everyone and every person in the Great Hall: professor, student and elf broke into a thunderous applause. Even some students in Slytherin couldn't help but applaud.

Alone among them all, two redheaded students sat firmly in their seats and looked at the kissing couple in pure anger. They had been rejected and they hadn't digested it well enough.

Harry broke the kiss and looked at Hermione, her hair a basket of a multitude of flowers and rested his head on her forehead, "I'm sorry Hermione, but I love you, more than life itself. Knowing you were angry with me, I could barely live through yesterday. I need you Hermione, more than you can imagine."

Hermione nodded enthusiastically and unable to say anything, kissed him while clutching to his shirt collar and didn't even let him breathe.

The applause died down as Professor McGonagall called out to the students to head to their classrooms as they had lessons to attend.

Harry probably didn't realize it as he was too busy staring into his lover's eyes, but every girl had eyes only for him and every guy wanted to strangle him for he would now be the standard to be met for all boyfriends.

One lonely girl left the Great Hall quietly when the final burst of flowers were seen. Her dirty blonde hair and sharp blue eyes, though prominent went unnoticed by her Housemates as she left in a rush and hid herself behind a suit of armour, tears she could no longer control falling from her eyes.

Luna Lovegood could take no more...

She heard footsteps of someone coming and quickly dried her eyes but for the life of her, she couldn't pretend not to care anymore.

She heard muffled profanities as whoever it was commenting on the sheer stupidity and gall of one Harry Potter.

She cuddled herself behind the armour, praying to God that its not someone from Ravenclaw as she could definitely not handle being insulted today at this time.

The muffled profanities stopped abruptly and she knew she had been seen, she raised her head from her lap and protuberant blue met stoic grey.

Luna was genuinely surprised and showed it and her visitor stared in surprise that he was seeing emotion from 'Loony' Lovegood.

"Honestly Loony, falling for the pot-head is low even for you." Said Draco Malfoy arrogantly with his trademark sneer.

Luna was about to get up and run when she got one of her visions. Luna didn't know what these visions were but they were disturbingly accurate and always came true. She never showed signs of being a Seer but she knew she had the Sight in her blood and she assumed her blood was acting up now as she went through puberty. It was rare but not unheard of.

She saw a brief glimpse of what the future may hold, she was standing in front of Draco, with a stern expression on her face as he looked at her apologetically, they were much older. He said, "I'm sorry" and she smiled and kissed him. The vision changed and the two were facing each other again, he said, "I'm sorry." And a green light shot out of his wand and all life was drained from Luna's intelligent blue eyes that sparkled no more.

Luna smiled at Draco as the implications of what she had seen sunk in, there was a reason she was not with Harry, because she was fated to be with Draco Malfoy.

'Well', Luna thought, 'It's a start...'

"Hello Draco, its nice to see you haven't changed much." She said serenely, a new hope in her soul for love.

Draco shook his head in disgust, "Don't talk to me, you might get me dirty with your words even. Filthy blood-traitor."

"Oh, I'm not a blood-traitor, just a heart-broken, confused teenager, the usual... What about you? What's got your panties in a knot?" She replied cheekily.

Draco looked at her sharply, "Trying to be funny Loony." He withdrew his wand and pointed it to her forehead, "I guarantee you that if I killed you, no one would even notice you were gone, in fact they would be happy."

Luna shook for a moment, every instinct telling her what she was doing was futile and hopeless but she was young and wanted to have hope in a desperate situation.

"You say you will kill me Draco, but yet here you stand, unwilling to do the deed. You may be right, no one would notice my passage, but if you head down the path you are going, people will remember your passage as a blessing rather than a sad event." Luna tilted her head as Draco's face burnt with fury.

"Why you!"

"Feel Draco, let yourself feel the thoughts and emotions you're burying deep inside. You deserve to feel and I'll be here when you're ready to feel them again." With that she moved away from his wand-point as he looked at her with utter surprise. Before she walked away, she made a bold move and kissed Draco on the cheek.

He looked at her flabbergasted, ready to make an angry comment but she was gone by then and his words were left unspoken.

Draco traced the kiss on his cheek absent-mindedly, loving the feel of it before shaking himself out of it.

'Crazy, deranged girl...' He thought without anger but amusement and shaking his head with a ghost of a smile on his face, he moved to Charms.

This exchange between the 'Ravenclaw Reject' and 'Prince of Slytherin' went unnoticed as everyone was busy discussing the latest development between Harry and Hermione. They all swore they saw it coming and were surprised they hadn't noticed it before.

Harry and Hermione sat companionably in Charms together and Professor Flitwick gave them a wide smile when they entered hand in hand and sat down together.

Before class started Flitwick came up to them and congratulated them on their amazing voices and even better performance. They blushed and nodded in thanks.

Everyone shot looks at Harry and Hermione throughout the lesson but they remained blissfully unaware, immersed completely in each other.

After class ended, Harry and Hermione left for Transfiguration only to be stopped by one Draco Malfoy and his angry quarrel with the infamous redheaded nuisance.

"Face it Weasley, they dumped you, or were you blind in the morning?" Malfoy said humourlessly.

"They're not!" Ron's face was red with anger, "They will NOT be! Hermione is mine!"

"Ronald Weasley! What are you talking about?" Harry ground out angrily.

Ron turned and looked between his angry expression and Hermione and his joint hands and made an uncharacteristically animalistic growl, "What the hell was that today Harry? You know about how I feel for Hermione?"

"And she doesn't return those feelings." Harry shot back.

"Ron, I made my thoughts and opinions clear to you when you approached me in the Library, do you really want me to repeat that answer in front of everyone and risk yourself being late to your next class?" Ron immediately hid his 'delicates' when he heard Hermione speak.

His intent did not waver though.

Hermione told Harry to go on and that she needed to handle this herself. Harry, very reluctantly left and he could distantly hear the shouting match between the two former best friends. Whether he

liked it or not, he actually was happy that they were no longer friends with the betraying Weasleys. In fact, he had some innovative ideas about how to order them around. Though the twins needed to be exempted as they had won Harry's trust. He would test them out soon enough to make sure though.

"Happy you took away the Weasel's mudblood Pot-head?" Came Malfoy's drawling voice from behind.

Harry turned angrily but reigned in his temper.

"At least I have a girl Malfoy, unlike yourself. And why is it you are constantly badgering me, forcing to get my attention? Are you so starved for male attention Malfoy? What are you, gay?" Harry teased and Malfoy turned stoic.

"How dare you?" He growled out.

"Take it easy mate, it was just an observation. Nothing to get defensive about. Either way, I needed to talk to you and since the opportunity has presented itself..." Harry had planned this out to get Draco out of his father's clutches before it was too late. He pulled out the official letter he had written for Narcissa Malfoy nee Black and handed it to Draco.

"This is for your mother, do owl it to her as it is impossible for me to send it to Malfoy Manor for some reason. I would advice you to not try to read it, it is meant only for her as part of my House." Harry chided gently.

"Excuse me? Is this a joke?" Draco asked dangerously.

"Joke? Heavens no. As Head of the Ancient and Noble House of Black, it is my duty to speak to the daughters of my family and I needed to have a word with her. Do pass it on as by not doing so, you are insulting the Head of Black Family, Malfoy vassal, and I can duel you to death for it." Harry said sternly before picking up his books and leaving.

The day passed quickly and woe-behold, Ronald Weasley had severed all ties with Harry and Hermione after their shouting match ended Ron with a startling pain in his pelvic bone courtesy of Hermione Granger. Hermione refused to tell him the details of the

argument but she guaranteed him that any revenge he wished to exact on Ron would be futile, he had paid, dearly.

Two days later, in the evening, Harry put on his best robes and under-attire for battle and left with Hermione to the Great Hall.

On the notice on the Bulletin Board, everyone was asked to assemble outside of the Great Hall as they would be practising there due to the sheer number of sign-ups.

Harry and Hermione walked into the Great Hall with Professor Flitwick and the talking died down. Harry suspected every student from 4th to 7th years from three Houses and even some Slytherins were currently in the Great Hall.

Harry approached the stage and asked everyone to settle down.

"Hi, my name is Harry Potter and I started this Defence Association so that we can adequately prepare for our exams and be ready for anything that faces us beyond the walls of Hogwarts. I know many of you do not believe that Voldemort," there were several gasps at the name, "is back, but I assure you he is. You can believe it or not but all training here is preparation for a time of struggle and we will be learning spells for you to protect yourselves and others around you. Muggleborns and Half-blood students know better than anyone how dangerous this is for them and so I advice them the most to work hard, for dark times lie ahead."

There was complete silence in the Hall and even Flitwick looked at him with awe as he spoke.

"We will be dividing you into three groups: Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced. If you are a Beginner, which I guarantee you, a lot of you will be, then fret not as you are here to improve and become better with your Defence skills. There will be a practical assessment for all three groups at the end of every, on the basis of which we decide whether to move you on or not. To decide which group you belong to, I want you all to turn to the person next to you and when I blow the whistle, duel. Hermione, Professor Flitwick and I shall be walking around and observing you, making decision on your placements."

Everyone nodded and turned to the person to their sides and got into duelling stances.

Hermione spoke, "No severely harmful hexes or jinxes, nothing that causes permanent damage, the only thing allowed are Stunners, Disarming and Shield spells. If you do not follow the rules, the answer is simple, you leave or we make you leave."

"Alright" Harry clapped his hands, "One, two, three... Duel!" He blew the whistle and a mad rush of lights could be seen.

Harry and Hermione calmly made their way around the arena and surveyed those duelling. It took lesser time than Harry expected and he stopped them after twenty minutes while Flitwick and Hermione sorted the groups.

"Alright, you guys did great! The Professor and Hermione are sorting the lists as we speak. If you see your name on the magically magnified list above Professor Flitwick, approach him and you will be a Beginner. If your name is over Hermione, go there and you will be an Intermediate. Finally if your name is on the list above me, come here as you are part of the newest Advanced Group.

As he finished speaking, three large lists sprung up and the students in the Hall divided and went to their respective teachers. Flitwick was ecstatic at the opportunity of teaching the basics of duelling to so many students, which was about two-thirds of the assembled students. The rest of them headed to Hermione and the eight remaining, went towards Harry.

Harry was a bit surprised with the result but hid it well, he was happy to see he had students from all four Houses as it would be hugely beneficial.

In front of him stood: Blaise Zabini, a seventh year named Ian Thomas, Justin Finch-Feltch, Luna Lovegood, Fred and George Weasley, Susan Bones and... Draco Malfoy (?)

"Good to see you all here. You were all amazing out there." Harry said, "You guys are the Advanced Group of this Defence Association. We will be training you to the best of our ability to make sure you are prepared. The Advanced Group shall be meeting on a separate day, every Thursday evening that is, from everyone else,

and as more and more people get to the Advanced Level, this group of eight should expand further."

"What makes you think you can train us Potter?" Blaise asked neutrally.

Harry smiled, "Why don't you turn up on Thursday and test it out for yourself? If you want, we can start with a duel between you and me and the you can decide whether to stay or leave if we are beneath you."

Blaise nodded his acceptance of the challenge.

Soon everyone filed out except Draco. Flitwick and Hermione shepherded students back to their dorms as Harry and Draco talked.

"Why did you do it Potter?" Draco asked, no contempt or sneer in his tone.

"I don't really know. Hermione calls it my 'saving people' complex, I personally felt you could be a worthy ally as much as a formidable enemy. Having you as an ally would be more beneficial." Harry answered cheerfully.

Draco raised his aristocratic eyebrow in question, "What makes you think I'd be an ally after nearly five years of endless enmity?"

Harry shrugged unfazed, "Better a neutral bystander than an enemy."

"Thank you... Lord Black." Draco nodded and turned to leave.

"You know Draco, the offer to be a Black is open to you as it was given to your mother. She is now Narcissa Black, she accepted the proposal as soon as she got the official binding contract in the letter, allowing her to return to the House of Black and divorce the House of Malfoy. Unfortunately, this rendered you a bastard and I am offering you the opportunity to rectify this." Harry said calmly.

Draco turned and nodded, "I'll think about it."

"that is all I ask." Harry answered.

Hermione hugged Harry after Draco left.

"That was a great lesson love. What were you discussing with Mal-Draco?" She said correcting herself.

Harry looked on Malfoy's retreating figure and muttered so only he could hear, "Trying to bring home a wayward child."

REVIEW REVIEW REVIEW

I wasn't so sure about the whole Draco-Luna thing but thought, what the heck? Might as well go ahead with it...

Next Chapter: Meeting with the Advanced Group, getting intimate with some other characters like Susan, Neville, the usual and some not so usual (I think...) and Voldemort's first strike. Also some development of the Draco-Luna love story, I have a weird plot bunny in my head about that but I am fearful to act it out, lets see how things go...

Also, please re-read the prophecy made in Ch. 3, some things may make some sense now... *wink*

Chapter 10

We're All in This Together

Week 1

Tuesday, 5.55 PM, Great Hall

Beginner's Session of the DA

Harry stood at the front of the Great Hall with Hermione and Flitwick. It was 5.55 PM and most of the students were already assembled in, eager to prove themselves.

At 6 PM sharp, the doors to the Great Hall closed, and Harry spoke the assembled students that were a little over fifty in number. Most of the Beginners were fourth-years and fifth-years, including Neville Longbottom, Hannah Abbott, Dean Thomas, Ginny Weasley, Lavender Brown, Parvati Patil and even Ronald Weasley, although there were some sixth and seventh year students who looked unsure and a bit embarrassed.

"I know some of you may feel embarrassed and even a bit out of place, being put into the Beginner's group, but I assure you that no ill-intent was pointed to anyone specifically."

Ron snorted comically but Harry continued undeterred.

"We shall be teaching you and making you master, this week and the next, six simple offensive charms: expelliarmus, stupefy, levicorpus, tellententia, reducto and Rectumsempra. This will be complemented with five defensive ones: protego, refleximo, mirririo, expulso and my personal favourite, protego maximus. After that, you will learn duelling stances, performances and techniques in the third. In the fourth week, we will test you individually and give you a preliminary score as well as areas where you can work on. During the weekend of the same week, you will have a special test designed to see, how well you have mastered, the beginning and basics of duelling. Based on your performances there, you will either be bumped up to Intermediate or continue to learn and practice harder as a Beginner. Any questions?" Harry finished confidently looking calmly at the enraptured audience.

A lone hand of Michael Corner went up.

"Yes Michael, isn't it?" Harry asked politely.

Michael nodded and even though a bit uncomfortable at so many people staring at him he persisted, "You said You-Know-Who was back in the last meeting... How can we believe you?"

Harry looked at him sceptically but answered nonetheless, "I have testified this and would willingly do this under Veritaserum but no one is interested in hearing the truth. Dumbledore himself has acclaimed to the fact. If you're here to try and get a good story out of me about what happened during the tournament last year, then leave immediately."

Nobody left and Harry nodded.

"Now if there are no further questions-"

"What are you playing at Potter?" Came the angry call from the back.

Harry's head snapped in the direction of the voice and Zacharias Smith stood tall and strong, "You can't just drop a bombshell like 'You-Know-Who is back' and then just not say anything."

Before Harry could reply, Hermione spoke up, quite scarily in Harry's opinion, "Well Smith, Harry hasn't come here to speak to you or anyone else for that matter about what happened. He's here to help you survive. If you think you are too good for the guy that bested You-Know-Who himself on multiple occasions, then you are completely free to leave."

Zacharias bit his tongue to prevent himself from lashing out at Hermione for he knew he needed the help. He just nodded and huddled back in the crowd, deciding to gain knowledge first and judge later.

Harry turned back to the now sombre students, "There will be no homework, per say, you are all free to practice and improve on you skills on your own time, in fact it is advised. If you don't however, it will be your loss. You will not be penalized in anyway whilst you attend this club, neither for absence nor lack of improvement. Though if you disrupt proceedings for those who care to improve

you will be booted and never be readmitted so think twice before you attempt that."

Seeing everyone accepting and some looking relieved that they have no homework Harry decided it was time to start the lesson of the day, "Today we will be learning the spells Expelliarmus, Stupefy, Levicorpus, Protego, and Refleximo."

Harry then went on to quickly explain the theory behind each of the spells and when finished he asked the students to turn to their Duelling partners and on blowing of the whistle, duel!

The whistle blew and shouts of different spells could be heard as various coloured lights flew across the room. After ten minutes of duelling, Harry blew the whistle again and the duelling stopped.

He then turned to everyone and smiled, "that wasn't half-bad but I would like you all to try something different." He was trying an experimental part of magic that Hermione and he had been working on for a while but decided to give it try.

"I want you to think about the result of the spell you want to cast rather than the words and wand movements."

People looked at him nonplussed and Harry smiled. He moved forward and stood in front of Dean.

"Dean, I want you to perform Stupefy, like you normally do, thinking of the spells and wand movement on me." He said it calmly but the dumbfounded look on Dean's face made him giggle nonetheless.

Finally Dean did as he was told. A red light of Stupefy headed Harry's way, which Harry deflected with a lazy Protego.

"Now Dean, I want you to focus on the result: seeing me unconscious due to your spell's success. I want you to concentrate on your magic and shoot it at me with all your force while thinking about me falling and nothing else."

Dean nodded and concentrated for a second. He opened his eyes, pointed his wand and said silently, "Stupefy". A blood red light shot from Dean Thomas' wand and Dean himself was thrown off his feet

due to the sheer impact of his spell. Harry had to literally hold up his shield for several seconds before the onslaught finally ended.

Everyone looked stunned and Dean looked between his wand and Harry several times with a bemused expression.

Harry smiled and clapped his hands.

About fifty dummies appeared in the room in front of the students.

"Choose a dummy and practice when I blow the whistle, then when I blow it again, switch to a different offensive spell. Begin!"

With that Harry, Hermione and Flitwick walked between students and helped improve their stances and postures and taught them better fighting techniques.

When class got over, Flitwick came and congratulated Harry on his novel way of using powerful magic.

Harry simply shrugged, "Hermione and I came up with it together sir. We're glad it worked."

After Flitwick left excitedly, Hermione kissed Harry and looked at him lovingly, "That was brilliantly done Mr. Potter."

Harry smiled but the smile did not reach his eyes, Hermione cottoned on immediately, "What's wrong Harry?"

Harry sighed and looked at his love lovingly, she never missed a single thing, "I'm worried 'Mione."

Hermione raised her eyebrow worriedly, "About what?"

"Something's coming Hermione, I know it is, I just can't seem to get an idea of what it is." He sighed dejectedly and Hermione hugged him.

"Whatever it may be Harry, we'll face it together." She said finally.

Harry stayed in her arms for a while before pulling back and kissing Hermione fully on the lips, "What would I do without you Hermione?"

"Make a mess of things for one." She said cheekily and Harry broke into a real grin.

"Come on, we have homework to do..." She said dragging him by the arm as Harry groaned.

Wednesday, 2 PM, a corridor near the Library

Draco sat down mechanically and looked about himself to make sure no one would catch him there.

He was tired and exhausted and couldn't catch a break. In one week, his entire life had changed. His mother was no longer forced to stay with his horrible father and after sixteen abusive years of marriage, she was finally free to pursue her own dreams.

Draco himself was now free and no longer needed to depend on Lucius or worry about how Lucius would attack his mother and exact revenge if Draco refused to fulfil his orders. Draco still felt shudders run down his spine thinking about it.

And then there was Potter. He had been told to explicitly hate Harry Potter and anyone related to him since he was five years old. But now that he was getting to know the guy, he didn't seem that bad. He had already freed Draco and Narcissa from the abusive Malfoy Head and had willingly accepted them in his own House, no questions asked. He seemed to trust them implicitly and Draco for the life of him could not understand why he did so.

Finally, there was a fresh trouble in his usually perfect world, a trouble in the form of one Luna Lovegood. Ever since he had that encounter with her, he couldn't seem to get her out of his mind. She was everywhere and yet nowhere. He couldn't have a single coherent thought unless she was around and when she was around, all his thoughts were about doing several things with and to her. Draco was quite alarmed with these new feelings and needless to say, he had checked every single one of his meals and his own self for effects of amortentia or any other love potions several times. Each time the result came up as negative but he was baffled to say the least as to why he had fallen so desperately in love the 'Ravenclaw Reject'.

"Hello Draco." Came a serene, dreamy voice and Draco needn't even look up to know it was Luna.

"Speak of the devil." He said softly as he looked up to face her and put on his mask of traditional sneer and aristocratic superiority and indifference, "What do you want 'Loony'?"

Luna smiled at him, "Why nothing at all, just merely being polite."

Draco huffed in irritation, "Really 'Loony'? Is that your only intention? Let me tell you this now, I will never fall for a complete nutter like yourself, so might as well stop trying and getting your hopes up. Am I clear?"

As Draco glared at her, Luna's smile didn't even diminish a fraction, "Crystal."

Luna stepped forward towards Draco and he unwittingly took a step back and gritted his teeth dangerously.

Luna simply came closer till Draco was backed against the wall and couldn't move further away from her. She was close enough to whisper in his ear, "You are not responsible for every mishap in your life. Let yourself breathe Draco, there are people around who care for who you are, not because you are or were a Malfoy."

Luna took three steps backwards and looked at Draco with a silent plea in her eyes, "I don't know what this connection is between us Draco, but what I do know is that I am NOT an empath. Yet I feel everything you feel, I can literally experience the hurt of memories as you go through them and I have no idea why. So please Draco, feel and let go of all these tortures, holding onto them will make you achieve nothing."

Luna then redoubled her steps and walked away from him as Draco stared at her in mute shock.

'What the hell is that supposed to mean?' He thought but didn't dwell on that thought for too long as he was getting late for Arithmancy.

7.00 PM, Great Hall

Intermediate Session of the DA

"Excellent work people, please aim and fire, that is a key to success." Harry said loudly for everyone firing at the rotating wheel could hear.

There were about fifteen people in the Intermediate session and they all looked fierce and ready to attack. Cho Chang had a fierce determination and Harry was more than a little scared to even approach her.

Hermione eased him of that fear as she went to Cho and helped improve the older girl's stance and stamina.

Harry walked around and noted that Seamus had extremely strong spells and had taken to the new way of casting spells extremely well. If Seamus continued the way he was going, he would definitely become Advanced level within the month.

Padma Patil and Daphne Greengrass were a surprise to Harry as they both exceeded all expectations and were performing admirably. They each had shot down six targets of their rotating wheels and with each failed attempt their aim was only improving.

The others were moving at a sluggish pace but Harry was sure they would improve nonetheless. Angelina Johnson was having a lot of difficulty controlling her magic as she performed it Harry's way but was extremely happy that her wheel had to be replaced three times because she burnt it down every single time.

Yes, Harry was quite impressed.

After another ten minutes Harry stopped the Intermediate wizards and asked them to pair up, one attacking, the other shielding.

They had even taught them several new shield charms that could be used to best counter the offensive spells.

After another hour and a half of intense duelling and practicing, the Intermediate wizards and witches and their trainers were exhausted beyond measure.

At 9 PM, Harry asked them to leave after congratulating them on a job well done.

Flitwick left after bidding them good night and Harry turned to Hermione with a thoughtful expression, "I have an idea 'Mione."

"Yes love?" She was immediately alert.

"We need to expand the membership of our 'little foxes', right?" He said tentatively and Hermione eyes widened as she caught onto his meaning.

"Are you suggesting...?" She began.

"Only the ones we trust." He answered before she could finish her question.

Hermione looked pensive for a few seconds as she considered his words and decided that Harry did make sense.

"I think I agree Harry." She answered.

Harry smiled and kissed her, "I love you so much 'Mione."

Hermione smiled back and kissed him, "Of course you do."

Thursday, 11 AM, Defence Against the Dark Arts Classroom

Neville stood alone in a corner of the classroom as Umbridge made all the OWL level students practice the Tickling Charm. Neville assumed that it was one of the few charms she could manage herself and it was first year charm for God's sakes!

He drove all thoughts of Umbridge out of his mind as he concentrated on the result he wanted. He wanted to create the perfect reflexive shield.

Umbridge came up to him and creased her brows in annoyance. Longbottom was not concentrating on the lesson, again!

"Stupefy!" She yelled to catch Neville off-guard. Neville instinctively felt the offensive magic rush towards him and concentrated with all his might on a shield and yelled,

"Refleximo!"

A translucent white shield sprang up in front of Neville as Umbridge's stunner bounced off of it harmlessly and was redirected back at Umbridge. She was so not prepared to deal with that.

With a loud bang, the stunned form of Dolores Umbridge fell to the ground and everyone stopped to look at the caster. Every Ravenclaw and Gryffindor student present there was stunned to say the least.

Harry grinned at Neville and began clapping his hands and soon everyone followed.

Neville was too stunned to speak.

Harry clapped his back and said, "Excellent work Neville! That was bloody brilliant!"

Neville smiled and whooped.

After class Neville happily made his way to Transfiguration. Even Umbridge's detention could not deter him from being happy.

As he was walking, he bumped into a young witch.

"Watch where you're going Longbottom!" Came an angry call.

Neville looked up sheepishly to apologize but found himself dumbfounded in the face of the ice-beauty in front of him. Daphne Greengrass, ooh la la!

"Um... I... I..." He spluttered incoherently.

Daphne simply swished her beautiful, long blonde hair in annoyance and walked away, leaving a completely swamped Neville Longbottom in her wake. At that moment, Neville made an important decision, he would win the affections of Daphne Greengrass, even if it killed him!

Thursday, 1 PM, Great Hall at lunchtime

Daphne Greengrass sat with her best and only friend Tracey Davis at the Slytherin table. While sitting there, they were both eyeing a particular green-eyed wizard with a lot of interest.

"What do you think Trace? Can we break him?" Daphne asked conversationally, never letting her gaze falter from Harry.

Tracey followed her gaze and replied casually, "Not a chance Daph. He's taken, quite obviously, with Granger. There's nothing really we can do about that. I suggest setting sights for those closer to his camp for protection. He's fiercely loyal and protective of those he considers family."

Daphne considered her words, "Weasleys?"

Tracey shook her head in negative, "Other than that being completely disgusting, you should see the way he gives his best friend, well ex-best friend now, the cold shoulder. He prefers to think that Ronald and Ginevra simply don't exist."

Daphne looked at the Gryffindor table closely and noted the people sitting around Harry. There was Granger obviously who was draped underneath his hand. Then there was the odd Lovegood girl; funny Potter would have her around. Then again, Potter was a funny wizard. She looked on and saw Seamus Finnigan, no, too simple-minded for her likes and a half-blood to boot. Lavender Brown; too much of a gossip queen and involved with the Thomas fellow who also was crossed from her list. Daphne wasn't against lesbian relations, she didn't mind being a pretend-lover of a girl if it got her what she wanted. Then there were the Patil girls, nah, twins were always tricky.

At that moment, a slightly round, determined boy entered the Great Hall and sat beside Harry who welcomed him with a huge smile and a wave.

Daphne found her man.

"I think I have the perfect choice Trace." She said with slight excitement.

Tracey looked up from her meal and spotted the Potter group and looked questioningly at Daphne, "Who?"

Daphne sighed dramatically and leaned forward, getting a perfect view of her prey, "Neville Longbottom."

Tracey choked on her food and after heavy breathing she swallowed and looked at Daphne incredulously, "Are you serious!"

Daphne smiled and looked at Tracey with a raised eyebrow, "Desperate times call for desperate measures my dear Tracey."

With that Daphne returned to her meal and Tracey shook her head in defeat.

Thursday, 6 PM, Great Hall

Advanced Session of the DA

Harry approached the eight students and nodded to Blaise, he had not forgotten his commitment to start the meeting with a duel.

Flitwick raised a duelling platform in the centre of the Hall and both wizards got on either side.

Flitwick then stood in between them and spoke as referee, "State your claim."

Blaise answered neutrally, "The real knowledge about what happened that night in the graveyard and Potter's admittance of inferiority to the House of Zabini."

People around looked surprised except Draco Mal...eh, Draco and Luna Lovegood who seemed to be stealing glances at each other.

Flitwick nodded and turned to Harry, "State the rules."

Harry smirked, "Everything goes."

Every student and Flitwick looked at Harry with raised eyebrows while even Blaise let his calm, collected mask slip for just a second.

Flitwick nodded once again and asked them to take ten steps, as they walked Flitwick stated the basic duelling rules, "Fire on three," as he eloquently put it.

When Harry and Blaise took the required amount of steps, they turned and faced each other.

Flitwick clapped his hands and said, "One... Two... Three!"

"Terentino!" yelled Blaise.

"Stupefy!" came Harry a second later.

Harry jumped away from the yellow light that was hurtling in his direction and he saw Blaise hastily erect a shield to protect himself.

"Incarcerous!" Harry said barely above a whisper.

The spell broke through Blaise's shield and bound him in tight ropes.

Blaise struggled against them as Harry sent a full body-bind his way. Blaise concentrated and pointed his magic outwards in all directions; the ropes turned into ribbons and Blaise deftly broke them and fired a refleximo.

Harry's body-bind came charging back at him and Harry created a special duel-specific shield that absorbed the attack rather than fought. Harry then concentrated his strengths in consolidating the power in the shield and supplying more to it.

Blaise took Harry's staunch posture as an indication that part of the body-bind had indeed struck him and responded with the most magically-exhaustive spell he knew.

"Fieremont Franchisement!"

With that spell, a large dragon of fire flapped its fiery wings and flew towards Harry.

Seeing the oncoming beast of fire, Harry redoubled the power of his shield.

The fire-dragon clashed into the shield and thrashed against it mercilessly, Harry continued to power it with all his might. Soon the dragon made a roar of defeat and dissipated completely, its energy being absorbed completely by the shield.

Harry then turned towards Blaise as a new idea struck him.

With his feet still shaking, Harry pointed his wand at Blaise and said, "Funnelminto Protego Expulsio!"

Harry's incredible shield that was glowing golden turned into a funnel, with its outer end faced at Blaise. The golden funnel then rotated on an invisible axis by an entire 180 degrees, such that its huge end faced Harry and the pointed end faced Blaise. With a rapid succession, a golden light shot out of the funnel's end blasted towards Blaise.

Blaise now recovered from his severe magical exhaustion, at least partially, cast the strongest shield he knew. He had no idea what the hell Potter was throwing at him.

"Protego Maximus!" A large dome-shaped shield erupted in front of Blaise as the golden beam impacted upon it. Then Blaise knew he had lost because the beam, unlike most offensive attacks was not targeting Blaise from all directions, but was concentrated on a very specific region. No sooner did the beam break through the shield, creating a small rupture in the awesome dome than it penetrated through and struck Blaise squarely in the chest, who no longer had the energy to run or hide.

The entire beam went through Blaise who screamed pitifully and fell to the ground in a lifeless heap.

Hermione and Susan yelled in fear at the sheer strength of Harry's magic.

Flitwick raised his hand with determination and announced, "Duke Evans-Potter is the winner; he may exact the same conquest over Mr. Zabini, scion of the House of Zabini."

Harry nodded at Flitwick who after his announcement rushed to Blaise's side and enervated him. Blaise had been knocked out, knocked out bad!

After administering several pepper-up potions, the Advanced Session of the Defence Association finally started.

Harry looked at the students and spoke calmly, "I hope that answers any questions regarding what we'll be doing in these Advanced Sessions. You guys are basically the strongest and I would like to congratulate Blaise for an excellent duel."

Hermione stepped forward, "you will all be in pairs of two and we all will duel against each other at the same time, the last pair of person standing will be the winner."

Harry smiled as he placed an arm around Hermione's waist, "Hermione and I will be joining you. We believe there is no spell or tactic we can teach you so we will become better ourselves by duelling with you. You can choose your partners."

Blaise considered Harry's words and decided his best bet was to get the best partner to increase his chances at defeating Harry and overcoming his humiliation. He looked around and spotted Susan Bones. Not a bad choice, she was strong and well connected and more than anything else determined to win no matter what.

Before Blaise could ask her Justin Finch-Fletchley made it there and she happily complied. Blaise looked away chagrined. He saw the infamous Gryffindor twins paired, obviously. That left Malfoy, the Ravenclaw Prefect, Thompson, and the Lovegood girl. Well his choice was clear.

"Draco, partners?" He asked and Draco looked at him as if breaking from a distraction.

"Sure." He drawled and joined.

Thompson turned with annoyance to the fourth-year from his House whom everyone hated and who was the cause for Ravenclaw not having a chance of winning the House Cup this year. The fact that it was their bullying that caused this made no entry into his brilliant Ravenclaw mind.

"Guess you are with me Lovegood. Try to not get in the way." He sneered at her.

Luna smiled serenely and nodded. In reality she was more than a little miffed that Draco hadn't chosen her as his partner.

Harry looked at the partnerships closely, he was sad to see that all the Houses had stuck with each other even if they weren't perfectly suited for each other. Based on his observations, he knew that both Draco and Blaise were heavily offensive attackers, making their defensive extremely overlooked and he would take heavy advantage of that. Justin was a moderate balance of offensive and defensive magic but Susan was purely a shield in human form. That might cause problems for them for if someone broke through her shields, their team would shatter. Thompson and Luna were a terrible match and the worst of the lot as far as Harry could tell. Luna was cold and lethal in whatever form of magic she did but Thompson was far too aggressive for their abilities to mix. The twins were the only ones whom Harry thought complemented each other.

"Knut for your thoughts?" Hermione asked conversationally as they got into duelling stances.

"Their partnerships are too weak, well, most of them." Harry answered in full-battle mode.

"They will learn that themselves, it is not something we can spoon-feed them." Hermione answered neutrally.

Flitwick stood at the back and nodded at Harry and Hermione, he then raised his hands and said loudly and clearly, "Assume battle stances, BEGIN!"

A volley of curses headed in all directions.

The twins fought bravely by each other sides, switching between offence and defence as the need arose. They both were very open with their attacks, not concentrating on a specific target but more concentrated on hitting any target. Ten minutes into the duel, George was putting up a courageous front as Hermione mercilessly attacked their duo while Harry fired curses at Zabini and Malfoy. Fred finally found a hole in Susan's artful and innovative defence and shot through it, striking Justin squarely on his chest. Justin fell onto the floor and as Fred turned around to help George against Hermione, he was struck at the back of his head with a stunner from Zabini that went wayward as it missed Harry.

George knew that with Fred falling, he didn't have much time left, he threw several strong curses back at Hermione who was blocked with

one of the strongest reflexive and mirroring shields George had ever seen. George was soon faced with a volley of curses, some of them his own as he too fell to the tender mercies of unconsciousness.

Susan was standing alone, knowing full well that her lack of offensive prowess would be her downfall. She needed someone who could handle that for she was a living shield, as she liked to call herself. Luna and Ian, who wisely avoided confrontation till someone fell entered the field and descended upon the lonely Hufflepuff. They threw a myriad of jinxes and curses at her and finally, after five minutes of endless struggle, they broke through her seemingly impenetrable defence and knocked her out.

Luna then pushed Ian out of the way of the incoming stunner from Zabini.

He looked at her angrily, "I could have handled it Loony!"

Draco who was fiercely involved in a battle of wits with Harry as Blaise entertained Hermione heard the comment and was shaken to his very toes.

He immediately shot an extremely strong fogging curse at Harry that confused both Gryffindors; he then left Blaise standing and ran to Ian and Luna. Without even thinking about his actions, he shot every possible magick he could think of at Ian who blocked him completely. Losing his temper completely, Draco shot a mad cutting hex at Ian that broke Ian's shield in half. Before Ian could come up with a suitable defence, Luna threw up a reflexive shield that sent back Draco's stunner and Draco ducked to get out of the way. Blaise, realizing that for some mad reason, Draco wanted to go after the Ravensclaws even though they had the Gryffindors teachers at their tender mercies decided to follow Draco, knowing full-well he couldn't handle Potter alone, let alone Potter and Granger simultaneously.

Blaise ran to Draco's defence and shot several powerful shield breakers at Thompson which decimated his shields, Draco followed up with a the most powerful stunner he could conjure that broke through Ian's hastily produced protego and stunned him. He was so happy that he didn't even notice when Hermione struck down Blaise and Luna shot a stunner at Hermione, which Harry blocked.

Luna was surprised but pleased that Draco came to her defence. But now she had a choice to make: either try and fight off Harry and Hermione alone while trying to keep off Draco, or pair up with Draco and have a real shot at taking down the Gryffindor duo. Her choice was made.

"Draco shield!" Was all she said as Draco sprung to her side and erected a powerful Mirroring shield. Harry decided to take the offensive and attacked with several Shield destroying hexes that he knew from the hunt for horcruxes from the previous timeline.

As the shield faded, he noticed Hermione weakening against Luna's unbelievable array of spells and decided to end it quickly. Harry conjured several broken pieces of debris around them into darts and then levitating them; he shot them at Draco and Luna's shield.

Harry knew that Draco's Mirroring Shield was hyper-effective against spells' energies but it was weak like glass in the face of real items being hurled its way. The darts broke through the shield, shattering it into several pieces. Draco did the first thing that came to his mind; he threw himself over Luna and shielded her from majority of the impact.

Luna was even more surprised by this gesture, but before going down with Draco, she shot two powerful stunners at Harry and Hermione. The first one, directed at Harry, broke through Hermione's two-person shield and the second one struck its target as Hermione fell to the floor, unconscious. Harry taking advantage of his opponents' disposition, shot several stunners in their direction and the two of them, already on the floor, were knocked unconscious.

Harry stood triumphant, seeing everyone round him and chuckled in black humour. It reminded him of the scene of Hogwarts after the Final Battle.

Flitwick clapped his hands maniacally and congratulated Harry; the two of them then enervated everyone else.

Hermione was quite annoyed that she got hit but Harry assured her that his victory is her victory and she smiled, finally.

"That was amazing guys, though I think you guys would agree that some of your partners may not have been the best choices. If we can, Hermione and I have some suggestions." Most of those who fell were not as happy as Draco and Luna for having survived till the end and were looking for any outlet to improve themselves.

Hermione came forward and spoke to the twins first, "We observed you two and we admit you two are brilliant for each other." They smiled but that faded and they spoke up.

"That's great and all to hear Hermione." Said Fred or was it George.

"But it still doesn't explain why we lost?" Said the other.

Harry answered, "Your were all over the place. Having multiple targets is great if you hit them at the right time, otherwise, like in a real duelling scenario like this one, you end up inviting the wrath of several duellers who descend upon you together. You can't survive them all after all."

They nodded.

Hermione then turned to Susan and Justin, "Susan, your defensive abilities are beyond excellent but you need to be more offensive if you are on your own. Also Justin, you have an excellent balance between offence and defence but you need to work on making them stronger."

They nodded then looked at each other as if in silent discussion.

Susan spoke, "I believe Justin would agree with me that we don't exactly make the best of partners, I need someone with better offensive skills as I can alone handle defence."

Justin spoke conceding, "Susan's great but I need to pair with someone who is balanced like me so we can switch between positions, giving the other time to recuperate and think."

"That's exactly what we think." Harry said, "Professor any suggestions."

The diminutive teacher had a thoughtful expression before he answered, "I believe I have the perfect solution. Ms. Bones would do

fine with Mr. Zabini, their combination would be a force to reckon with. Mr. Finch-Fletchey, I believe, would do wonders with Mr. Thompson, both have balanced duelling styles and can complement each other well."

Susan, Justin, Blaise and Ian nodded and moved to their new partners.

Hermione spoke to Ian, "I think you need to be calmer in battle Thompson, it was your aggression and impatience that got you defeated by Zabini."

Ian was chagrined at Hermione's comments but nodded nonetheless.

"Blaise you were amazing, but I strongly suggest based on my observations here and our duel previously that you need to use spells that will not magically exhaust you." Harry said, "In this type of a battle setting, you need to be prepared to fight for extended periods of time. By defeating one powerful opponent you do not win the battle, just a skirmish within the battle. Your stamina is your key and easier spells, if aimed and used correctly can get you the same results."

Blaise considered Harry's words and nodded, "I think I know what you mean Harry. I believe I have a better duelling idea now than before. But with Ms. Bones covering me I think I can manage a little exhaustive offence, I have complete faith in a shield she conjures after all." He said, letting a rare smile come to his lips.

Susan blushed at the praise and nodded to Blaise appreciatively.

"What about me Potter?" Draco drawled as if annoyed with being left with Luna though in reality he was ecstatic.

Flitwick answered before Harry, "Mr. Malfoy-

"I am no longer a Malfoy sir. My mother and father are divorced, rendering me a bastard, you may refer to me as Draco." He answered neutrally.

Everyone looked at him surprised, especially Blaise whose head whipped a whole 180 degrees to look at Draco in the light of this declaration.

Flitwick stared mutely for a few seconds but continued nonetheless, "Very well, Draco, you seem to have an excellent form of fighting with Ms. Lovegood. Your abilities together are lethal as you two complement each other with her calm but silently aggressive fortitude and your fierce defence."

Draco nodded and looked at Luna oddly who smiled genially.

Hermione spoke to Luna, "That was amazing spell-work Luna! Being the youngest proves nothing about ability as you have deftly shown. You were the last to fall if Professor Flitwick is correct. Although I am going to get you back for besting me this time."

Luna smiled at the praise as everyone laughed at the comment; her mind was reeling with thoughts of Draco and his recent declaration. Maybe there was hope for love and a future with him.

Harry clapped his hands in finality, "That's all for tonight guys and I must say that was amazing work. Work hard and next week, maybe we can make this even better!"

Everyone dispersed and Susan was on her way with Justin to Hufflepuff Common Room when Blaise stopped her.

"Hello Ms. Bones, may I have a word?" he asked cordially.

"Of course Zabini, you can call me Susan though, we are going to be partners after all, a touch of familiarity is necessary for a successful partnership, or so my Aunt says." Susan said kindly, though a threatening blush was rising to her cheeks.

"Very well, Susan, etiquette asks me to extend the same courtesy to you, so please I am Blaise to you from now on." He answered in a gentlemanly fashion.

Susan nodded as her cheeks burnt but Blaise seemed not to notice.

"I would like to ask you to join me on Saturday perhaps, so we can perhaps practice together and even get to know each other better, if that is agreeable with you?" He said, and Susan was surprised to hear a quiver in his voice.

"Like a date?" Susan asked cheekily.

"Well, no! Not a date! Purely a... professional get-together." He said as he spluttered and his mask of calmness fell slightly. Susan smiled at him winningly and Blaise sighed, "Well, maybe... if it were agreeable with you... it could be... a... d...da-"

He was struggling to get the words out and Susan couldn't help but laugh at his discomfort.

"A date it is Blaise, I'll see you on Saturday then." She said as she turned.

Blaise smiled broadly, "Saturday it is Susan."

With that Blaise walked away with a new bounce in his step.

Susan returned to walking back to Hufflepuff Common Room with Justin, "Damn girl! He's so totally into you and he's hot to boot!" Came Justin's comment.

Susan smiled and squatted him on the arm, "Oh you would know wouldn't you Justin?"

"I'd do him in a second if I could." Said Justin dreamily, "That long height, those fit tone muscles, and lets not forget what they say about black men and their big, black..."

Susan squealed as she covered her ears, "I swear Justin, sometimes I wonder why I keep your secret?"

Justin smirked at her, "Well because you are a Hufflepuff and we Puffs stick together, that's why. And I'm sure most people by now have figured out that my orientation is towards the same sex, its quite obvious."

Susan chuckled and shook her head, "Whatever Justin."

Saturday, 2 PM, near the Lake

"No Blaise, I disagree, if you expend all your energy into sending out one powerful shot, you may not have anything left for further fighting. Duelling is as much a fight of strengths as is of stamina." Susan argued heatedly.

"Then again Susan, if you never exhaust yourself with exhaustive magic, how can you ever raise your stamina? You can only move forward when you push yourself to the edge." Replied a calm Blaise.

"Fine," she huffed and stood in a duelling position, "I will defend, you will attack, and lets see how far you can pull this."

Blaise chuckled and rose from their picnic blanket on the ground, "you asked for it."

"Stupefy!" he yelled and a red jet of light hurtled towards Susan.

"Protego Illumentius!" A large red shield erupted from Susan's wand and engulfed her from all sides.

Blaise's spell bounced off harmlessly. He then went to attack Susan with every possible spell in his arsenal and though deterred by some of the spells and nonplussed at others, Susan held on with all her magic and might.

When Blaise yelled, "Temporus Tempelamia!" Susan knew she was in for trouble, she responded in the best way she could.

"Accio Blaise!" She yelled and her wand acted upon Blaise and pulled him towards her. The two crashed into each other as Blaise's spell impacted upon them and they were thrown into the Hogwarts Lake.

Shivering violently, Blaise's head emerged from the lake pulling Susan along with him. As he got out, he warmed her immediately with several spells and gave her some hot chocolate to sip on and perhaps stop her violent shiver.

"That was... innovative." Blaise complemented a few minutes later.

Susan looked at him with mischief in her eyes and came forward, still draped in the blanket he put around her, "Yes... Quite."

They were close enough and finally, Blaise moved forward with a smile on his face as their lips met. They kissed gently but firm dispositions. They were worthy adversaries and possibly greater partners.

When the kiss ended Susan looked at Blaise impishly and winked. She got up from the blanket and ran, "Catch me if you can Zabini!"

Blaise smiled possibly the widest smile he has ever graced on his face as he ran after her. Within seconds, he caught her and they tumbled to the ground laughing.

Blaise was on top of her as he bent forward and kissed her again and Susan responded enthusiastically.

After several heated moments their lips parted and Susan spoke, "So what does this mean?" Susan asked inquisitively.

Blaise looked at her surprised, "I thought that was obvious, you Susan Amelia Bones are now my girlfriend."

Susan looked at him with a hint of surprise, "Oh, and don't I get to choose?"

Blaise looked at her and smiled cheekily, "Oh you most certainly can choose, just that if you choose anyone but me, I'll hex him into next week."

Susan engulfed Blaise in her arms and said, "Well then, good thing I chose you then."

They laughed heartily and kissed some more before finally going back to the school, hand-in-hand.

Week 2

Monday, 1.30 PM, in an empty classroom

"Expulso!" Neville yelled for the thousandth time only to see the book weakly move towards him and then drop halfway.

"Damn it! I'm hopeless..." He yelled as he sat down helplessly on the classroom floor with his head in his hands.

He was wallowing in self-pity that he didn't even notice someone open the door and head in.

"Maybe if you concentrated on the result instead of the spell." Came a high-pitched feminine voice.

Neville's head shot up and he saw the last person he expected to see, the Slytherin ice-queen, Daphne Greengrass.

"Hi... I... I..." He spluttered.

Daphne smirked at his predicament, "Really Neville, you can speak, I won't bite." She said saucily.

Neville just stared at her and nodded before heading back to disappointment again, "I'm trying to get it right but it just doesn't seem to work for me. No matter what I do, no matter how much I try, I just can't seem to get the hang of these spells. Why am I so useless?"

Daphne was expecting this to be easy and she thought she'd be bored with the Longbottom scion but she was surprised to note that she was most definitely interested in him. His determination if nothing else was admirable.

"Maybe its because you are trying to pull something you don't want towards you, maybe you should start easy. Pull something towards you with that spell that you really, really want and focus on it within your reach." She said helpfully.

Neville stood and pointed his wand upwards, "Expulsio!" He said with all his might.

Several, visible red tentacle-like vines erupted from his wand and attached themselves to Daphne. She was inexorably pulled towards Neville as he closed his eyes and kept his arms open. Daphne's frame crashed into his and he opened his eyes and looked immediately apologetic, letting her go.

"I'm so sorry Daphne, I didn't mean to..." Was all he could get out before Daphne engulfed him in a hug.

"That was amazing Neville and if I do say so myself, quite an admirable bit of magic. Now all you have to do is focus that want to things you want around you." She said letting him go and internally laughing at the dreamy expression on his face.

'Oh this is going to be so easy' She thought happily.

Over the next hour, Daphne coached Neville into producing better results and Neville was improving tremendously under her watchful, penetrating gaze. Within that single lunch-break, he had mastered the expulso and stupefy charms and couldn't be happier.

"Thank you so much Daphne, I cannot think of a way to repay you." He said as they headed to their Potions class.

Daphne placed a finger under her chin and looked pensive for a moment before replying, "How about taking me out to lunch, since we missed this one, next Hogsmeade trip?"

Neville spluttered like he usually did in the beauty's presence and she laughed honestly and not pretending.

"I'll take that as a yes. Bye Neville..." She said in her most alluring voice as she walked away from the still shocked frame of Neville Longbottom.

Tuesday, 4 PM, Ravenclaw and Slytherin 4th and 5th years heading back from collective Care of Magical Creatures Class

Luna Lovegood was walking happily back to the castle. It had been a wonderful weekend for her as she spent it sitting by the Lake with Draco. They didn't sit together and didn't even exchange a single word the whole weekend, but he just stayed there, keeping a watchful eye on her and she didn't bother to tell him otherwise. Harry and Hermione joined her for a while and Hermione even asked her why Draco was watching her so closely but she just shrugged.

Right now, she was stealing glances at her blonde-haired hunk from time-to-time, as she was sure he was doing the same. It was

impossible to explain why they were suddenly so attracted to each other. She just knew when he was hurting and he her for some unexplainable reason. The only time she had felt completely secure since as far as she could remember was when he shielded her during the DA lesson. Every time they touched, even if it was brief to the point of non-existent, it filled her heart with love.

She didn't even realize when she banged into one of the girls in front of her.

"Hey! Watch it Loony!" Came the aggravated voice of Lisa Turpin, "for God's sakes at least watch where you're going!"

The next thing they all saw was Lisa Turpin being hurled across the remaining path to the castle. Everyone turned as one and saw the wand of one Draco No-name pointed at Lisa. Lisa got to her feet shakily ready to give Luna the verbal bashing of her life when she realized who hexed her and the result shocked her to the very bone.

"Call Luna a name again and I will personally distort your already distorted face Turpin." He said calmly and dangerously.

Draco didn't say another word and walked away.

"What the hell Loony!" Came the sneer of Theodore Nott, "Are you the reason he's no longer a Malfoy. His father found out he affiliated with the likes of you and disowned him, not that I blame Mr. Malfoy, how did you get Draco anyway? Wait, don't tell me, you slag!"

That was the last thing he said as Luna's heart was breaking with every word he said but she got the second shock of the day when Draco's fist impacted upon Nott's face and threw him to the ground.

"What happens in my family is none of your business Nott and so is whom I affiliate with or do not for that matter." He then turned to everyone around who just stared in dumb shock, "Anyone else have to say anything about Luna or myself?"

When nobody answered and some even shook their heads in fear, he spoke again, "then what are you waiting for? Get lost!"

They scampered away and leaving only Draco and Luna behind.

The two of them just stood there staring at each other. An easy wind picked up and Luna's hair was blowing.

Draco just stared at her with a calm sneer on his face. Internally, he was revelling at the sheer beauty of Luna Lovegood. Her oddness was strangely alluring. Her dirty blonde hair, shining as the sun moved to the West. Her blue eyes; silent and intelligent to epic proportions. Her fair skin, calling on him like a siren. How could anyone ever make fun of this vision of beauty? He would personally kill anyone who did so.

With that he nodded to Luna and walked away. Afraid for some irrational reason that if he spoke to her, he might disturb something and lose her like he did to most other things.

Luna, with every passing day was falling more and more for Draco; he was her saviour and her man. He would choose her over anyone else and she was sure he would be everything she'd ever ask for. If only he'd give some indication that he shared her feelings. Then again, she herself wasn't very vocal about her feelings. She watched his retreating figure and sighed deeply, someday he would speak to her, hopefully...

Tuesday, 7.30 PM, Great Hall

Beginner Session of the DA

"Come on Neville, I know you can do it." Came the quiet encouragement of Hermione Granger as she saw Neville once again try to create the perfect Protego Maximus.

The red dome appeared for a second before flickering and disappearing.

Neville sat down dejectedly as people around him were all succeeding at various levels.

"I'm hopeless Hermione." He said quietly.

"No Neville, you are not hopeless, you are a strong and powerful wizard, only if you believe in yourself." She replied gently.

Seeing her words have no affect on him she sat down beside him, determined to help her friend, "Neville, you need an anchor, what's your anchor?"

"My... anchor?" He said questioningly.

"Everyone needs an anchor Neville. Something or someone to give them strength to succeed. After all there has to be a reason for them to succeed in casting every spell. If there is no reason to succeed, then why would one succeed in the first place." Hermione answered calmly, but seeing Neville's confused expression she elaborated, "For example, when I cast a spell, I'm thinking about a specific someone, Harry to be specific. I think, 'this spell will help me keep my Harry safe no matter what' and so I learn it with enthusiasm and passion, because it helps me keep my Harry, my anchor safe."

Realization dawned on Neville and he stood up, he concentrate on imagining Daphne standing behind him, depending on him to protect her from whatever's after them, "Protego Maximus!"

A golden dome escaped Neville's wand and surrounded Neville and Hermione. Hermione gasped in surprise and so did many others present.

Neville opened his eyes and stared awestruck at the beautiful shield he had created. Surely that was impossible, he, Neville Longbottom – the almost squib – could never be capable to magic as awesome as this.

"Amazing Mr. Longbottom, twenty points to Gryffindor for creating a Guardian Shield" Flitwick was practically bouncing in excitement.

"What's a Guardian Shield Professor?" Asked an inquisitive Ravenclaw.

Hermione answered as she always does, "A Guardian Shield is a near impenetrable shield, only the most powerful wizards are capable of casting it, and it can only be created by those with the noblest of intentions. A shield meant to protect against everything except Unforgivables, a shield always meant to protect the caster and the one the caster wishes to protect. A true feat of magic and rarely ever seen for even some of the most accomplished wizards

have trouble with it because it requires an unimaginable amount of emotional intent behind it's casting."

Neville continued to look at his shield mutely and was even more surprised with Hermione's answer.

"Right you are Ms. Granger." Flitwick said happily.

"Great work Nev!" Harry said clapping him on the back, "I knew you could do it."

Several others congratulated him, even a shocked Ron Weasley who was undoubtedly impressed.

After the session ended Hermione came up to Neville, "You found an anchor, didn't you Neville?"

Neville nodded embarrassed.

"I won't ask you who she is Nev, but she should know she's a very lucky witch and she has a very powerful wizard protecting her." Hermione said kindly and went back to Harry who was waiting for her with open arms.

Wednesday, 8 PM, Slytherin Common Room

Draco sat in his usual place, annoyed because he was thinking of the best way to respond to his mother; a way which would placate her and not compromise him in anyway. He needed her to know that he was fine being a no-name and preferred his position as a no-name rather than be attached to someone. He could not and would not accept Lord Black's charity; there was too much enmity and black history there to just be forgotten. They could be casual acquaintances but never anything more.

That's when Pansy Parkinson came and sat down beside him.

"Draco, may I have a word?" She asked quietly.

Draco looked at her cautiously and nodded, "What do you want Pansy?" He drawled.

"Draco... I have loved you, for as long as I can remember. From the first time I met you, my father told me that someday I would be your bride. I believed him and prepared myself for that day ever since." She said in a monotone.

Draco looked at her flabbergasted, he was about to tell her off but she held up her hand indicating she wasn't done yet, "I know you don't love me, never have, never will. But I want you to know, that I have loved you, with all my heart."

The usual mocking face of Pansy was replaced with shinning tears, "I want to see you happy Draco, that alone will help me be happy. I can live with you not loving me," she took a deep breath and composed herself, "you are free Draco as you have always been free-spirited, but if you have any respect for all the love I have given you without you even asking, then please, admit you are capable of love."

"Pansy I-"

"You love her Draco, what you are feeling, this intense feeling of protection and possession. The unbelievable desire to just see her happy, the horrible anger at hearing even a single bad thing about her. Being completely and utterly lost in her mesmerizing beauty, seeing the world in her single smile. You love her Draco and she loves you back. Give her the chance she deserves, the chance you deserve and love her." Pansy's voice broke at this and she heaved a huge sob but managed to smile despite it.

Draco looked at Pansy with a respect he never held for her before, "Thank you Pansy, but it is more complicated than that."

Pansy laughed at this and her voice croaked as she bit back another sob, "Draco, all I ever managed to make you feel was irritation, but she, she elicits more feelings in you with one look than I have while throwing my being at you. The only thing holding you back is you, and you need to give her a chance, if not for yourself, or her, for me... Please... All I want," more tears fell from her eyes, "is to... to... see you... happy."

Pansy broke down and Draco was at a complete loss at how to handle this situation. Pansy held up her hand but she still hiccupped and cried, "Good bye Draco."

She ran away up the staircase to the Slytherin Girls' Dormitories and Draco stared muted in shock and mulled over her words.

Pansy Parkinson crashed on her bed and cried desperately at the loss of her first love. If she was being honest with herself, she always knew he never loved her, but she convinced herself that if she tried, she could convince him otherwise and win his love. But now she knew better.

Pansy rose from her bed and wiped away her tears as she walked to her room window that overlooked the sea. She saw the sun setting and she felt more tears fall down her eyes.

Her roommates Daphne and Tracey came into the room and for the life of her she couldn't help herself and continued to cry.

Tracey came and hugged her, "You told him, didn't you?"

Pansy nodded in her embrace as her body rocked with sobs.

Daphne soothingly stroked her hair and pressed her shoulders with her other hand while giving Tracey a desperate look.

Tracey whispered quiet niceties into Pansy's ear and soon Pansy calmed down.

The three Slytherin girls sat down on Daphne's bed as Daphne rummaged in her trunk and pulled out a curious bottle.

"What... What is that?" Pansy asked in between sobs.

"This Pansy, is the best Russian vodka around, my father nearly disowned our House-Elf when I stole it. Tonight, you need it more than anyone." Daphne replied calmly.

She popped open the bottle and poured it into three shot glasses she transfigured from useless junk she possessed, "Tomorrow's a new day Pansy and tonight is to mourn and forget." Tracey said as they cheered.

"Bottoms up." Said Daphne as the three girls drank their first of many shots, it was going to be a long night in the Slytherin dormitory.

Thursday, 10.30 PM, Great Hall

Advanced Session of the DA

"Careful George, Hermione's on your right and she looks murderous." Said Fred as he blocked another lethal curse from Blaise.

"Right you are Fred." Said George as he sent several stunners in Hermione's direction and then distracted her pushing her towards the fight between Justin-Ian and Luna-Draco.

"Hermione love, I think I have an idea to end this quickly as painfully, but it will be a stretch." Came Harry's tired voice.

"I'm all ears." She replied as she stopped a curse from Draco.

"We split and attack mindlessly." Came Harry's eloquent strategy.

"Fine, better than being dragged into a stalemate." Hermione answered to Harry's surprise.

"On the count of three." He said.

"One" Said Hermione.

"Two," said Harry.

"Three!" They said together and broke away from being back-to-back and attacked individually, never stopping their run.

Harry ran towards the twins' and Susan-Blaise's teams and shot attacks at them without stopping. He cast a wandless shield secretively and held onto their attacks as he struck them down. When the dust cleared, he had caught Fred, Blaise and George, Susan alone stood strong with a blood red shield in front of her.

She twirled her wand dangerously, never letting her gaze leave Harry.

"You knocked down my boyfriend Potter!" She screamed as she threw every offensive spell she knew in Harry's direction.

Harry blocked several and then threw himself to the side when he realized he hadn't enough magical prowess to halt the advance of an angry witch.

"Stupefy!" Came Hermione's voice and struck Susan squarely in the chest when she wasn't looking.

Harry turned to Hermione's direction and saw she had incapacitated Justin and Ian but was duelling alone against the dangerous duo of Luna and Draco. He rushed to her side and cast a strong shield to keep Luna's lethal spells at bay.

"Hermione, I need an offensive now!" He bit out at her.

Hermione responded instantaneously and Flitwick circled the two fighting couples with interest. In all his years he had never seen such strong fighting force in teams that he saw with these couples.

After five minutes of endless brawl between Hermione and Luna exchanging spell-fire, all the other teams had been quietly enervated by Flitwick and were standing on the fringe of the battle, looking on with fascination.

Harry called on his entire magical being and forced out his magic, a dozen sharp knives headed towards Luna and Draco, which Draco's shield was more than enough ready to fend off. He learnt his mistake from last time. The knives clattered to the ground and Flitwick blew the whistle and ended the battle.

"I think we have a tie," came his excited squeak, "Excellent work both couples."

The remaining teams clapped politely and Harry, Hermione, Draco and Luna looked relieved and very knackered.

Flitwick spoke up, "Oh my! Its far past curfew. You have been battling for four and half hours. Poppy will have my head on a platter if this continues. Back to your dorms and if Filch catches you tell him to speak to me."

Draco escorted Luna back to Ravenclaw Tower as Ian and Justin disappeared to take a different way. They didn't say anything to each other, just walked in endless silence.

Draco was wondering if he should say anything to Luna and she was wondering what she should say to him. As they passed by the Astronomy Tower, Luna changed course and Draco followed her without question. She stood on the Astronomy Tower roof and stared lovingly at the stars.

"You know Draco, I'm certain my mother is among them." Luna said after a while.

"Whatever do you mean Luna?" He asked despite himself.

Luna looked at him, smiling like she usually did around him, "My mother used to say that when people died, they watched over their loved ones as stars from up above. I'm certain she's there, for me."

"What happened to her?" He asked, his voice barely above a whisper.

Luna looked at him sadly but spoke nonetheless, "She was an extraordinary witch, who loved to experiment. One day one of her experiments went badly wrong, I was nine."

Draco choked up. Even though Luna was outwardly not expressing anything but mere casual conversation, he could feel the deep sadness and depression coming off of her in waves. He came forward and gently draped his arms around her waist drawing her close to give her comfort and to comfort himself for some odd reason.

GASP!

Both of them looked at each other wonderingly, an electric current sparked between them and Draco immediately let her go.

"I'm... I'm sorry Luna." He said after a heady silence.

Luna merely looked up at the stars that were twinkling brightly.

"You felt my sadness, didn't you Draco?" She said calmly.

"I don't know what you're talking about." He replied with a sneer, "I'm no empath." He said reiterating her words and Luna chuckled, infuriating him further.

"Well Draco, you know why I hide my feelings, what about you?" She asked turning to face him.

"I... I..." Luna sighed.

"Very well Draco, when you feel comfortable telling me, you can do so. I won't press you." She said and walked away.

"Luna wait..." He said following her but she stopped him.

"I'll find my way Draco, I always do; you need to find yours." She said serenely and Draco looked at her oddly, how could she just read him like a book always confounded him.

Luna kissed Draco on the cheek and another current passed between them, causing them to shiver.

She moved back and regarded him for a few seconds before walking away, her blonde hair swishing in the moonlight.

Draco No-name just stood there, feeling... He had no idea what he was feeling, but he was feeling and that was something he normally never allowed himself to do.

He had a lot of thinking to do.

"Goodnight Luna." He whispered into the night before walking away to Slytherin Common Room.

Week 3

Wednesday, 7.30 PM, Great Hall

Intermediate Session of the DA

Daphne was duelling with Padma Patil and both girls were holding their own. Spells were being exchanged at a rapid pace and Daphne was sure she would win.

"Jadoo tantar mantar!" Came Padma's spell as she awaited her impending stunner.

Daphne had no idea what the spell was, all she knew was that when it impacted upon her fell to the floor and was blinded. The only thing she could see was complete blackness.

A few minutes later, a triumphant Padma Patil and Hermione standing nearby with an eager smile on her face waked her.

"What was that?" Daphne asked confusedly. She was sure she had never heard that spell before.

"That was an Indian spell, I infused Indian tantra to our Latin-based magic with heavy Arithmancy, that was just one of the many spells I've created." Padma explained calmly.

Hermione was literally bouncing, "you have to show me your research Padma, that was unbelievably fascinating."

Padma smiled at Hermione, "Absolutely."

The two girls talked of the possible effects of Ancient Indian battle Magic with their modern abilities and that was when Daphne tuned them out.

She was looking at Harry help Seamus perfect a spell that he was struggling with. He really was an amazing wizard.

Harry walked up to her after exchanging a few words with Cho.

"Daphne can I have a word?" He asked calmly.

Daphne looked at him oddly, he had never spoken to her unless it involved helping her with a spell of piece of magic she was struggling with. She nodded and he spoke, "I know you and Neville have something going on and I just wanted to tell you that I know why you started a relationship with him."

Daphne looked at him wide-eyed, "What-?"

"Look Daphne, I will not judge you as you have done nothing wrong to me, but I will tell you this, Neville is an unbelievable powerful wizard, he just needs to believe in himself. Since you've come into his life there has been an astounding improvement in his spell-work. I couldn't, in good conscience, take that away from him. Give him a chance Daphne, for I can tell you now that I would bet my life on Neville, he is a strong, passionate and compassionate wizard and he would die for you." Harry sighed deeply, "Just think about it."

Daphne just nodded.

After a while the session ended and Daphne headed back to Slytherin Common Room with a lot on her mind. If she was being honest with herself, she did have some feelings for the big, gentle Gryffindor boy and wanted to have something with him, but... He was a Gryffindor and a traditional Light Family's scion to boot! Then again Daphne Longbottom had an oddly nice ring to it.

It was with these thoughts that an unusually happy Daphne Greengrass, Slytherin ice-queen went to bed.

Week 4

Thursday, 9.30 PM, Great Hall

Advanced Session of the DA

"Excellent work guys, you all will do amazing on tomorrow's assessment." Harry said proudly to his best DA members.

Hermione spoke up, "We're ending early today so everyone can have enough time to sleep and be ready for tomorrow."

Everyone left and Draco lingered behind, Harry walked up to him and spoke up, "Have you reconsidered joining the Black family Draco?"

Draco looked at him surprised but shook his head in negative, "I appreciate the offer but have decided against it. I will be my own man and no one will tell me how to be me. I was actually hoping to have a word with Granger."

Harry and Hermione were both surprised with his request but Harry nodded and told Hermione he'd wait for her outside.

Hermione turned to Draco and spoke calmly, trying to keep the surprise out of her voice, "Is there something wrong Draco?"

Draco looked around nervously, "I wanted to ask your advice about something."

"Yes...?" She said invitingly.

"There is... well you see... there's this girl... I want to... but... never mind! This is a silly idea." He said stomping away.

Now Hermione isn't considered the brightest witch of the age for nothing.

"Wait Draco." He stopped and turned to look at her, "If you really like her, then tell her. She will acquiesce if you give her the opportunity."

Draco looked surprised but just nodded and walked away, he had a lot of thinking to do.

When Hermione caught up with Harry he asked inquisitively, "What was that about?"

"Oh, I think you will know soon enough." She answered mysteriously and quelled any further question with a resolute kiss.

Friday, 8.30 AM, Breakfast at Great Hall

Luna was happily eating breakfast with her new Gryffindor friends. She smiled and laughed at the right moments but her mind kept running back to Draco and how distant he seemed at the previous DA session. She hoped she hadn't pushed him too far.

All conversation stopped as a lone figure approached Gryffindor table.

Luna looked up to see a tall, blonde man walk up to her and stop in front of her.

All chattering the Great Hall died down as everyone looked at what was going to happen between the 'Ravenclaw Not-so-Reject' and the 'Ex-Prince of Slytherin'.

He looked at Luna, boring holes into her with his intense gaze and muttered incoherently for a few seconds before taking a deep breath and saying the hardest words he ever thought he'd have to say,

"I'm taking you on a date tomorrow as my girlfriend." With that he promptly turned around and walked away.

Harry, Hermione, Seamus, Dean, Lavender and pretty much everyone else in the Great Hall looked on in muted shock.

At that moment Harry burst out laughing and it was contagious as everyone laughed their hearts out.

After the laughter died down Harry turned to Luna and said humourously, "All that brooding and worrying for that! And he barely said anything anyway."

Hermione looked at Luna who was still in shock and asked curiously, "So does this mean you are his girlfriend?"

Luna looked at the older girl wondering the same thing, "I think so."

Lavender screeched, "Of course you are Luna! Oh! My! God! We have to decide what you're wearing tomorrow!" As soon as school is over, we're taking you for a complete makeover, your usual will not do!" lavender exclaimed repeatedly.

"What about our DA assessments today?" Neville piqued in.

Lavender dismissed him casually, "Some things are more important than defensive training."

"Even if your life depends on it?" He replied disbelievingly.

Lavender looked Neville straight in the eye and replied, "If she doesn't look her best tomorrow, what's the point of living anyway?"

Everyone laughed again as Lavender dragged Luna and Hermione and Parvati out to discuss dress options.

Luna was in for a whirlwind experience.

Little did she know how big a whirlwind the coming weekend was going to be.

Sorry for the unexpected cliffhanger. I'm morally against them but if I wrote anymore I would physically exhaust myself and didn't want this chapter to be extended anymore.

Bonus points for anyone who can guess why Draco and Luna are so attracted to each other. It's a real obvious, fanfic, kind of answer *hint hint*

Next chapter is going to be a Voldemort strike that will hopefully surprise you and Wizarding Britain is going to plunge into war much sooner this time.

Chapter 12

Faith in the Weekend from Hell – Part I

Friday

Breakfast at the Great Hall

08:00 AM

"Harry please, you need to eat something." Hermione insisted for God-knows-how-many-th time and Harry just shook his head in disapproval.

Hermione sighed and put down the pile of potatoes, "Really Harry, you aren't this bad even before Quidditch games and you aren't even being assessed in this instance-"

"Which is why I am even more scared 'Mione. This will show how much these guys are taking all this seriously, it shows that they have some chance at surviving," he lowered his voice so only she could hear, "You don't know what it was like 'Mione, seeing all those people die, seeing the destruction that just one man caused. If this can help even one person, just one to survive, I would think we were successful."

"O Harry..." Hermione lamented, shaking her head in defeat and throwing her arms around him, drawing him into an embrace, "why are you like this?"

"You call it my 'saving people' thing, others dubbed it 'moral fibre'. You still love me despite it?" He asked with mocked concern but a smile on his face.

Hermione smiled impishly, and drew him in for a kiss. "I love you because of it, I love all of you Mr. Potter, more than you can imagine." She sighed and rested her head on his shoulder. She added as an afterthought when Harry still hadn't relaxed, "Harry, everything will be fine, we've done all we could have done. Have some faith..."

His shoulder she was resting on relaxed a little and Harry chuckled; she could feel it by the movement of his shoulder. He reached out and picked a few potatoes onto his plate, then ate ravenously.

They sat in comfortable silence as they saw people around them engage in casual banter while others dragged along in the morning, nobody noticed the silent exchange between the two lovers, except of course, an angry redhead sitting far away, all alone with her brother.

Ginny Weasley could not understand where everything went wrong. She had tried to make Harry fall in love with her, she even had all the plans laid out to make sure he would fall in love with her. Yet he still rejected her for the book-worm. What did she have that Ginny didn't?

Ginny angrily drove her fork through her food and splattered it all over the person sitting beside her, the only person who sat with as no one else would associate themselves with people whom the Golden Gryffindor Couple would reject. Ronald Weasley's table manners had not improved with time as he shovelled mass amounts of food down his hatchet, what he seemed to call a throat.

Ginny was not amused.

"Eat like a human Ronald and maybe some girl might notice you." Ginny said with annoyance.

Ron briefly stopped eating to glare at her, swallowing his food so he could articulate better for her benefit he added, "well, you seem to have excellent table manners and no guy seems to be interested in you. Therefore, I am happy just the way I am, thank you very much." He finished and immediately drove back into his waiting plate.

Ginny sighed exasperatedly and shook her head in bewilderment. At that moment she had a rare moment of insight. If she modestly examined everything that happened to Harry and Hermione and the way they were being treated, did she honestly think he owed her anything?

Harry defeated Voldemort and was sent to abusive muggle relatives as soon as he lost his parents. Since re-entering the magical world, his troubles had not stopped at all. First year, he faced Voldemort

again, second year, he saved her and destroyed that blasphemous diary, third year, he faced his parents' real betrayer and saved an innocent ex-convict, fourth year, he handled an illegally entered competition and fought dragons, merpeople, acromantula, sphinxes and Voldemort himself. He survived it all, only to be doused with love potions keyed to someone he was supposedly 'destined' to be married to.

If he indeed was destined for her, why had they needed to use love potions in the first place? If he indeed was a saviour, why did he look malnourished and sick all the time? If he indeed was her fabled hero, why had he rejected her so blatantly when she was told he was to be hers no matter what?

Ginevra Molly Weasley broke from her epiphany at that moment and was roused to the outside world when her brother mumbled through his food-filled mouth, " 'Lass i' st't'n!"

Ginny grabbed her bag and headed off all alone, having no friend to accompany her, not even batty old Luna Lovegood who had somehow gotten paired up with the Slytherin Prince. The world was turning upside down and Ginny knew change was in order to make a difference. She couldn't stop the world from changing, but she had to adapt to those changes in order to be able to move on and be successful.

'I am going to impress Harry with my defensive techniques today and win at least his approval, if not his love. Maybe I'm not for him, but if not for him, then who?'

Ginny shook off her doubts and fears and headed off for Transfiguration, her back arched and jaw set with determination for the day's assessment. She will have faith.

Friday

4th Year Gryffindor and Ravenclaw Transfiguration Class

09:00 AM

Luna Lovegood was calmly sitting in her seat in the middle of the classroom. Despite everyone's thoughts that she was somehow popular now, she knew better. None of the Ravenclaws forgave her

for what she had done by ratting them out and losing their chances for winning the House Cup.

Yet, she couldn't bring herself to care. She had achieved all that there was to achieve to keep her happy. Friends, real friends, in the forms of Harry and Hermione, a group of people who accepted her oddities and a, dare she admit it, a boyfriend in the form of the resident Slytherin bad-boy and rebel, Draco Mal... uh... Draco. Yes, things were definitely looking up for Luna Lovegood.

Among other things, she was curious what the Advanced Level's assessment would be and in a way, she couldn't wait to find out, this was her chance to prove to all the Ravenclaws that she deserved her place on the Advanced Team of the DA. She was tired of people insinuating she had gotten there out of sheer preference due to Harry and Hermione befriending her. Her hands were itching to show them all exactly what she was capable of in a battle simulation, with her man by her side to watch her back.

"Class, please come to order." Came the stern voice of Minerva McGonagall and all conversation immediately ceased.

Luna looked up with interest at the aging Gryffindor Head of House and wondered briefly if she could someday apprentice her in Transfiguration, it would be a valuable experience. She shook her head out of those thoughts and concentrated on the lesson, they were doing advanced animal transfigurations and today, they were turning a toad into a sword.

With a few concentrated swishes of her wand, Luna managed to change her toad into a long, pointed, emerald-encrusted sword that had hints of pale diamond on the sides.

"Twenty points to Ravenclaw Ms. Lovegood for a perfect and excellent sword." Said Professor McGonagall with pride as she lifted the sword and examined its handiwork. "I say dear girl, how did you manage to make it jewel-encrusted, that is extremely advanced magic?"

Luna shrugged her shoulders and answered, "Well I was envisioning the person holding this sword as well as the sword itself while performing the spell, my magic imbibed qualities of that person into

the sword's physical manifestation, or so it seems, for that is not how I envisioned the sword to look."

McGonagall raised her eyebrows in surprise and gave the odd Ravenclaw a rare smile, "Well, whoever it is should be happy to know he has someone so powerful looking out for him. Another five points to Ravenclaw for ingenuity."

Luna smiled in her odd, Luna-like way as McGonagall bustled away to help a fledgling Gryffindor Lion.

Ginny picked that moment to have a conversation with Luna, "You were thinking about Harry, weren't you Luna? The emeralds match his eyes exactly," she sighed and continued, "Luna you are very lucky you have Draco now. Don't pine over Harry, he seems to value and respect you and I'm speaking from experience here, don't lose that over trying to win his love, it is not yours to have."

Luna looked at Ginny oddly until her words clicked into place, "Thank you for the warning and concern Ginny; but I'll have you know that the emerald does strikingly resemble Harry's eyes, however, it is also the emerald-green of Slytherin and the blonde paleness of Draco's hair with the diamonds." She said with no sting in her words, "I forgot Harry and moved on a while ago Ginevra, although, am I to believe you have finally come to your senses and done the same?"

Ginny looked surprised at Luna's answer and subsequent question expelled in the same breath, "Well... yes..." Ginny looked away sadly, "Its hard... I always thought it would be him. Then in my first year, he goes off and bloody kills a basilisk to save my sorry little arse. I was already obsessed with him, save idol-worship and he kills not only a sixty-foot ancient basilisk that belonged to Slytherin himself but also a bloody version of You-Know-Who in the flesh. Merlin, can a girl be blamed for falling in love with someone like that?"

Luna silently listened to Ginny's whispered rant and her heart went out for the teenage girl. Ginny was not trying to be a manipulative bitch, she thought she was getting a man meant for her, but he wasn't. Realizing the one she had given her heart to all these years was the wrong person could have a grieving effect on someone. Yes, she was grieving because to her someone had died. The Harry she

worshipped, the Harry she considered her knight-in-shinning-armour, the Boy-Who-Lived of (and in) her dreams, the image of that messiah, had died and she was grieving the image she had devoted herself to. She was shocked initially; then she denied it to herself, when she couldn't deny it any longer, she was angry, monumentally angry and now she was through with being angry. She was sad and in the fourth stage of grief. Soon, she would reach the fifth and final, acceptance.

Luna clasped Ginny's hand within hers and spoke softly to comfort the only girl in her year who had tried to ever be friends with her, "Ginny, Harry is a forgiving man, when he knows you have mended your ways and see him for who he is rather than who you want him to be, he will reaccept you."

Ginny nodded mutely as she prevented the tears from flowing and soon enough class got out and Ginny ran to the girl's toilet to weep in peace. Luna saw her make a run for it and was hot on her heels.

She entered the toilet to hear Ginny's sobs from one of the empty cubicles and she quietly swept in and, without Ginny even realizing it, cradled her in her arms. Ginny was initially reluctant but ultimately gave in, having missed the slightest of friendly touches for a while now. She wept her heart out and clung to Luna as if her life depended on it and Luna held on equally tightly never uttering a word.

A while passed before Ginny finally calmed down enough, the occasional hiccup still escaping her as she dabbed her red face and puffy eyes with a handkerchief.

She laughed quietly and the laughter grew to be full-blown and almost maniacal, but Luna (being Luna) was unperturbed.

"Look at me!" Exclaimed Ginny, "Crying myself hoarse for a relationship that existed solely in my head. I'm such a dramaqueen!"

Luna hugged her and spoke softly, "The relationship was real to you and you convinced yourself it was real to him too. Now that you've accepted it wasn't so, the true weight of what you've done has crashed down on you and you don't know how to fix everything. Its okay to cry yourself hoarse, you are finally healing..."

Ginny felt tears she thought she was now drained of slowly fall from her eyes and further drench her already drenched kerchief.

Luna stroked her hair kindly and held onto her for a while longer, "he'll... never... forgive... me..." Ginny muttered in between sobs.

Luna cooed calming words in her ears until she calmed down and then faced her with the most determined look Ginny had ever seen on the normally-distracted face, "He will forgive you Ginevra, if your heart is pure and your intentions free of malice, he will..."

Still hugging, the two girls rose from the cubicle and moved to the sink, "Come on, let's get you cleaned up." Luna said kindly.

A little cleaning later, a few more reassuring hugs and Ginny was in a much better state for the rest of her classes.

Before parting, as Ginny was headed to Charms and Luna Arithmancy, Ginny asked one final time, "Would he really ever forgive me?"

Luna smiled at the vulnerable redhead and squeezing her hand in answer, "Have faith Ginevra, have faith..."

An emotionally spent redhead and fiercely determined blonde then parted ways, each with a little given to the other, a little faith...

Friday

5th Year Slytherin and Hufflepuff Ancient Runes Class

11:00 AM

Daphne Greengrass sat with her back turned to Blaise and Draco. Both were discussing intensely a fine point on Ancient Runes for their upcoming group project. Unfortunately, Daphne had been paired with them. While it was a good idea because they were passionate about the subject and pretty much did it all themselves, never even asking her for her input as they knew the subject nonplussed her, it was unfortunate because she was stuck with two Rune-nerds. Of course, that was something she would never say to their faces, they were widely recognized as the smartest and scariest Slytherins and duellers, she was intelligent enough to know

not to tempt them as to be at the receiving end of one of their wands. However, it didn't make her situation any less mundane.

Her thoughts drifted off to Neville Longbottom. Daphne definitely admitted to herself that when she initially showed interest in the bumbling Gryffindor, it was for protection and for a safety valve in the growing Potter group. She, though neutral due to her family's status, was privy to the fact that Lord Voldemort was indeed back and he was going to wreak havoc on anyone who opposed him.

That 'anyone' basically comprised of Harry Potter and his followers. On the off chance that Harry won, Daphne wanted to be able to claim protection on his side, she was after all a Slytherin and loose-ends did not bode well with her.

However, she was coming to actually develop some form of feelings for Longbottom. Ever since Harry had spoken to her, she knew, he knew, her plans and designs to win his favour in the advent of the Light's victory. Longbottom was her ticket, but he warned her not to betray or hurt Longbottom.

How could she, or anyone else for that matter, ever do that to him? He was a kind, loving, loyal and adorable boy, who was so obviously taken with her. He was so different from any other boys she had dated. All the others waited for the first opportunity to head into a broom closet and snog to oblivion, they would always try to fondle her breasts and in one particularly bad encounter, do more. Longbottom hadn't even tried that, in fact, he respected her so much that it hurt to use him. She wasn't even sure if she was using him anymore, because if she could not be with him, then who would she to be with, one of the randy Slytherin bastards, who only dreamed of fucking and forgetting her?

She still remembered how her last relationship ended with Theodore Nott.

"Why can't I fuck you Daphne? You are my girlfriend for Merlin's sake!" Nott whined.

"We're fifteen idiot and I am not losing my virginity in a casual romp!" She answered venomously.

Nott looked at her oddly and had a rare, contemplative look on his face, "Well, if you are so desperate to maintain your virginity, I could always bugger you instead."

"You want to WHAT!" Daphne spat in disbelief.

"You know..." Nott answered, uncomprehending to that fact that she knew exactly what he meant and was too shocked to answer directly, "Instead of the regular hole, I go into the-"

SLAP! PUNCH! KICK TO THE BALLS! WHACK!

Theodore slumped to the ground in pain, crouching into a foetal position.

Daphne shook her head warily thinking about how disastrously that ended. Whatever in the world she was thinking when she agreed to date that moronic excuse of a human being was beyond her.

"Ms. Greengrass, I would appreciate you concentrating on your project instead of daydreaming." Came the stern reprimand of Professor Babbling.

"Sorry Professor." Daphne muttered as she turned around to face Blaise and Draco, who were so deeply involved in discussion, they didn't even notice her. Daphne rolled her eyes in exasperation.

"... Fine fine Draco, but I still disagree that the Clearance Cross can be a better sticking valve than the Patent of Purity." Came Blaise's intellectual gibberish, "I think I'm going to ask the Professor for some advice."

"Do and let me know what she says, once we solve this, we can finally put this together and be done with this project." Draco answered in his characteristic drawl.

Daphne was daydreaming about the dilemma confronting her and didn't even notice Blaise leave to talk to Babbling.

Draco looked at her speculatively.

"Something interesting on the ceiling Greengrass?" He asked facetiously.

Daphne snapped out of lala-land and fixed an icy look upon him, "Nothing at all Mal... Draco."

Draco smirked unperturbed, "I was only trying to get your attention," he said raising his hands in surrender which surprised Daphne to no end, "care to share your thoughts, in my experience, that helps more than you can imagine."

"What has that Lovegood girl done to you?" Daphne muttered in complete shock.

Draco just chuckled humourously, "Well, she insists I try to be a little more light-hearted, in fact, it's a mandatory requirement and something I could not forgo. Its, what's the word," he said snapping his fingers trying to remember, "ther-a-peu-tic, I think that's the word she used."

Daphne stared at him with even more surprise, "What's that supposed to mean?"

Draco shrugged his shoulders, "Some muggle term that she's studied in great depth about. Beats me why she cares to."

Daphne shook her head at the craziness and lunacy of Luna Lovegood and still all that craziness had landed her the former Prince of Slytherin, something not even the former Princess (Parkinson) had managed to do.

"Its trivial." Daphne finally muttered.

Draco simply shrugged his shoulders again, "If not me, talk to someone you know and trust Greengrass. Nothing wrong with a little input. However, if it's about Longbottom, I understand your reluctance."

Daphne looked at him with a stricken face and Draco just smiled, "What? You may hide it from the Slytherins but that doesn't mean word wouldn't get out. Longbottom told Potter, who told Luna, who eventually mentioned it to me in passing."

Seeing her fear grow ever more Draco hastily added, "I'm not planning on blackmailing or the sort Greengrass, think of it as a,

um..." He scratched his aristocratic chin in thought, "new and improved Draco. I've known for a while and it's not my business to tell. Although, I should warn you, if you hurt Longbottom, Potter and Granger will have your hide hung on their wall and I for one wouldn't take that threat lightly."

Daphne stared at him in surprise but shook her head in incomprehension, "Again, what has that Lovegood girl done to you?"

"Started to turn the wheels to make me a better person. Now, do you want to talk?" He answered cheerily.

Daphne sighed and placed her head on her hands, hiding her face while speaking, "It initially started out as him being a safety route, a save-me ticket to be part of Potter's campaign without actually declaring allegiance to any side, but now, I don't know anymore."

She looked up, thinking she'll see the ever-present, tell-tale Malfoy smirk but instead she saw a contemplative Draco who was seriously considering her words.

He looked at her prone form, her head defeated in her hands and answered honestly, "Well, I'm fairly new to all of this love stuff but I'll tell you what Luna told me to do to truly recognize my feelings for her, breathe and feel Daphne. Let yourself breathe and feel what you want to. Forget inhibitions and responsibilities and just act upon those feelings, the conflict will end and the answer will be in front of you."

Blaise came back and Draco and he re-entered their discussion while Daphne silently pondered on Draco's advice.

She closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

'This is stupid!' she thought,

'Maybe, maybe not' came a voice from within her and she gasped mentally.

'Who are you?' she whispered fearfully.

'Your conscience.' Came the reply.

'This is getting weird.'

'Only if you see it that way...'

'What should I do?' She asked finally, not being able to relent any longer.

'You are falling in love with Neville, that is a fact and you must accept it.'

'I am not!' Came Daphne's angry retort.

'Hush! In this case, I actually do know better!'

'So... what should I do now?' She asked nervously, knowing it was pointless arguing with herself.

'Decide whether you love him enough to give up neutrality and plunge headlong into the abyss, or continue in this state of limbo you've gotten yourself into and tread an unsteady path. Personally, I'm rooting for plunging into the abyss.' Came her conscience's answer.

'That's crazy!' She screamed back.

'You asked.' Came the remark.

'I refuse to accept this!'

'You already have...'

"NO!" Daphne didn't even realize when she said it out loud and all conversation stopped as people turned to look at her with expressions ranging from confusion to mocking.

Daphne blushed in embarrassment and muttered an apology for the interruption and actually started listening to Draco and Blaise's Rune banter. It was safer, if infinitely more boring, than listening to her conscience.

After class Draco held her back and asked her what she was doing.

"I don't know Draco, I can't decide what to choose." Daphne answered in defeat.

Draco placed a comforting hand on her shoulder, "You have time to decide and you will make the right decision, have faith..."

With that the two reformed Slytherins headed to the Great Hall for lunch. Neither of them noticed the lone, shadow of someone overhearing their conversation from behind a pillar. The eavesdropper ran at breakneck speed to the Owlery and immediately sent a letter.

Father,

Daphne is most vexed about a decision she seems incapable of making. I fear the rumours of her affiliation with the firm Light family, Longbottom's scion are true. If so, she is putting herself and the family in jeopardy of earning the Dark Lord's displeasure. I am deeply worried by her actions and hope you will do the needful.

Your daughter,

Astoria Greengrass.

Friday

Great Hall Lunch-time

01:00 PM

Draco No-Name parted ways with Daphne Greengrass as he headed towards the Gryffindor table to speak to Luna. He was calmly walking up to her and was happy to note nobody really cared. At least this time all conversation didn't cease to look at him.

However, he was distracting himself from his task at hand. He would get through with this because he knew the way he asked out Luna was not appropriate and he had to do it in a better way.

On finally reaching the Gryffindor Table he broke out of his thoughtful reverie and stared straight at the girl who had won his affections. She was engaged in a deep conversation with Grang... er... Hermione. Gosh, it felt odd to think of Gr-Hermione as a friend.

Hermione nudged Luna's shoulder and indicated not-so-subtly to Draco's prone form that was just staring intently at Luna from a foot's distance, waiting for her acknowledgement.

Luna turned her head and looked at Draco with a small smile playing on her lips. She loved the look of him halfway through school: robes half-open with a ruffled look, blonde hair, sleek and perfect, his shirt unbuttoned halfway down so she could clearly see a hint of the tight muscles he had underneath and his eyes, oh his haunting grey eyes took her breath away.

Draco stared at her with nothing short of reverence. She was in her prim Hogwarts robes and didn't look as odd or batty anymore as no one stole her things. Her robes were clearly fastened around her body, and since she hadn't bothered to buy new robes since the past year, they were slightly small and hugged her frame perfectly, emphasizing the lush curves she possessed. Her shirt buttoned all the way up, portraying her modesty but also bringing out the telltale hint of her ample bosom. Her dirty blonde hair splayed over her shoulders with a single braid running along the centre and best of all, her imperturbable, dreamy, deep blue eyes that never ceased to take his breath away.

"Hi..." They both said to the other breathily and simultaneously, releasing a breath they didn't realize they were holding.

Understanding dawned on their faces causing the ever-dreamy and emotionless Ravenclaw Not-so-Reject and the forever-arrogant and proud Former-Prince of Slytherin to blush deeply.

"Um..." Draco spoke after looking at a fascinating pattern on the floor for a few moments, "do you want to have lunch with me today Luna?" He said never letting his eyes of the pattern that seemed to engross him to no end.

Luna just grinned broadly and only when Hermione not-so-subtly pushed her shoulder did she snap back to reality and answer, "I thought you would never ask."

Draco's head snapped up from the ground and he flashed a brilliant grin at her. He offered his hand to her and she daintily accepted,

following him out of the Great Hall amidst heavy catcalling and whistles from their new friends.

Hermione sat back and Harry placed an arm around her, "What do you think 'Mione? Will they last?"

Hermione looked at Harry with a large grin plastered on her face, "I had my doubts, but they're all seemingly unfounded now. I think they will make it Harry."

Harry nodded and smiled, "Good. Those two are so unbalanced, they need each other to neutralize their own oddities."

"True, I think Draco will be excellent for building up Luna's sense of self-worth and Luna will be excellent in convincing Draco he has a reason to fight for our side." Hermione commented thoughtfully.

Outside Draco was gently leading Luna to her favourite spot under the large oak tree near the Hogwarts Lake. The giant squid's arm was lazily perched on one of the banks, taking no notice of the young lovers.

Draco quickly set out a mat on the ground and had Luna gently sit down on it. All the while Luna had a large smile on her face, never before had anyone ever treated her like a queen like Draco was doing at that precise moment.

She carefully extricated her school robe and placed it on the side, bunching up her skirt, she sat down quickly and indicated Draco to sit beside her.

Draco just stared at her and felt all his blood head southwards. Without the robe, he got to truly see Luna in all her glory for the first time. A perfect thin waist with large ample breasts and, dare he admit it, but through the thin cotton fabric of her shirt, he could see the light pink colour of her nipples. Her soft, creamy legs shining as the sunlight glistened off of them.

He sat down immediately and crossed his hands over himself to prevent his 'state' from being discovered. He was confused and did not know how to react, no one ever had this sort of effect on him. He had been with girls before, his father had taken him to a particular muggle club when he was but thirteen and told him to claim a

woman for it was time for him to grow up. All those times, he had no idea what he was doing but went along because his father demanded it. Now, he really had no idea because never before had he been so reactive to a girl that he was erect and ready by just the sight of her, without any stimulation whatsoever.

"So..." Luna said breaking the silence, "Is there any food for this lunch or are we going to starve?"

Draco's eyes widened in realization and he hastily took out a miniature picnic basket from his pocket and enlarged it.

"Sorry," he muttered in between tasks, clearly flustered by his predicament, "Um... the house-elves were really helpful, Harry showed me how to get into the kitchens."

He removed several dishes that were present at lunch that day including blueberry pie for desert, but also a special pudding that Luna had never seen before at Hogwarts.

Draco very nervously placed the pudding and pie in the middle of the lunch setting and gulped involuntarily.

"Um..." He started to explain, "The elves made the pie, but I know how much you like pudding, so I tried making some... I mean... Its not all that great or anything and I didn't exactly spend a lot of time on it, its ok if you don't like it of course, that's why I got the pie. I mean to say, you can tell me if you don't want it because I'm not exactly the best cook but..."

As Draco continued his pointless rant and grew more and more nervous by the second, Luna simply stared at the pudding, pudding someone had made keeping her specifically in mind. Pudding Draco had made for her because he knew she liked it. A tear fell from her eyes and she sniffed inaudibly.

"...I mean, um... You know..." He said uncertainly eliciting no reaction whatsoever from Luna.

Luna threw herself at Draco and wrapped her arms around his neck tightly. The two young teens fell heavily onto the ground and Draco responded by wrapping his arms around her waist and drawing her closer.

"No one has ever done this for me. No one ever cared enough to try." Luna said, tears streaming down her eyes, years of pent-up frustration and sadness seeping through at this one simple gesture.

Draco had no idea what the hell was going on. He was feeling Luna's sadness and elation, loneliness and sense of fulfilment. He was literally feeling it as if it were coming off of waves from her and crashing into him like a lone jutting rock edge in an ocean of Luna's emotions.

Draco gently lifted Luna up and sat her on his lap as she rested her head on his chest. He carefully tried to place her beside him but she wouldn't let go, wordlessly, he let her sit there, happy as ever to have her there in the first place.

He kept his arms around her for a while longer and soon felt her soft, warm hands run on the inside of his shirt. Before he realized it, he felt Luna's fingers calmly tweak one of his nipples and a shudder past through him. He looked at her with confusion, only to see a broad, mischievous smile on her face.

"Luna what are you doing?" He asked confused.

"The Pink Pellawanters were trying to get to you, I was stopping them and the best way to do so is touching your nipples." She answered seriously.

Draco laughed booming and clutched onto her more.

Once he calmed down a bit he added, "Well, you can tweak my nipples whenever you wish to, pink pellawanters or not."

"Oh my..." Was all Luna said as she slid one hand lower to his bulging pants, where his erection had been straining for a while.

"Uh Luna... I... I..." He said, red blush colouring his face.

Luna smiled, "I believe I like making you blush, its as Hermione says, sexy."

The traitorous blush magnified tenfold and the normally very articulate Draco was spluttering wordlessly.

"Oh my, it seems when you blush it spreads to your chest too," Luna said scrutinizing his chest and the red colour there, she bent closer and kissed him on his chest.

Draco made an animalistic sound and Luna simply moved upwards and kissed him on his neck, she had no idea when her lust amplified so much but she couldn't even think straight at the moment.

Her lips worked on their own accord and captured Draco's lips. A power and unbelievable force washed over the two of them and they kissed with their hands pulling the other closer. Draco licked the bottom of her lip and gaining entrance, fully explored the depths of Luna's mouth.

Several minutes of exploration passed before Draco finally relented needing oxygen, though hating his need for air at that precise moment.

Luna sighed, resting her head on his chest, her legs straddled around his waist, without her even realizing it, one hand in Draco's pale, perfect hair, dishevelled it like never before and the other in his shirt, stroking his perfect abs.

Draco was in no better position, with his head rearing on top of her head, one hand underneath her skirt massaging her firm bottom and the other stroking her nipple through the thin fabric of her shirt.

A loud groan was heard and Draco chuckled, "Sorry, I seem to have distracted you for far too long from lunch."

Luna looked up at his smiling face and answered, "I'm not complaining."

"But your stomach is." He quipped back and they laughed together.

She turned around still on his lap and grounding her arse on his erection and he groaned while she smirked, doing very well and thanking God that it was easier for girls' to hide their arousal.

"I think I'm starting with desert, pudding first..."

They had a nice lunch together, punctuated with random snog sessions that got steamier and longer with each time.

At some point Luna had backed Draco up on her favourite oak tree and had basically undone his entire shirt when he muttered as she kissed his chest and ate pudding off of him.

"Luna..." he murmured, "I haven't exactly done this properly and Merlin knows I'm not doing this right, right now, but will you do me the honour of being my girlfriend?"

Luna ate the last of the pudding and rising met his gaze and kissed him soundly.

"I will Draco, you need to have more faith in yourself." She answered calmly.

Draco returned the kiss and crushed Luna to his naked chest, "I have faith in you..."

Friday

5th Year Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw Arithmancy Class

02:00 PM

Justin Finch-Fletchly sat in his usual place, beside his best friend Susan Bones and tried with all his might to concentrate on the lecture, but for the life of him, he couldn't bring himself to care about Professor Vector's lecture.

"... You have the rest of the class to work on your spell-crafting, remember to be cautious and double-check all your calculations before trying a spell."

Susan turned to Justin and immediately noted the forlorn look on his face.

"What's wrong Jus?" She asked in concern.

"I don't know Suse, I don't know what to do anymore." He sighed exaggeratedly and looked at her with defeated eyes.

"Speak to me." Susan commanded softly.

Justin just shook his head; he had no idea where to start. Should he tell her about all that had happened that night before their last lesson at the Advanced DA when she went off with Blaise or not?

"Justin!" Called Susan, "Blaise and I are taking a small walk to the Hufflepuff Dorms, I'll see you tomorrow okay?"

Justin smiled at his best friend and her enthusiasm for her first boyfriend, "You go get him girl!"

Susan squealed excitedly and headed off with Zabini who gave him a thumbs-up and an equally enthused smile at seeing Susan.

Justin smiled inwardly at the sheer improbability that a Snake and Puff would end up together and actually work, then again, a lot of weird things were happening these days.

He picked up his bag and began making his way to the Hufflepuff dormitories alone.

Ian Thompson came up from behind and placed a hand on his shoulder.

Justin turned around and faced him, "Hey partner," he said breaking into a grin at the sight of his usual duelling buddy, "want to take a walk?"

Ian smiled but Justin sensed there was something behind that smile, "yeah..."

The two walked in silence and Justin kept on wondering what the hell was wrong with his usually very-vocal partner.

When they came closer to Hufflepuff dorms Justin couldn't take it anymore, "Ian, what's wrong boy? You look like you've seen Merlin's ghost tell you he wants to sleep with you."

Ian laughed softly at the joke and Justin's smile widened at the success of his attempt to lift his partner's spirits.

Ian fixed a steady gaze on Justin and answered, "I like someone, a lot, but I don't think I can explain my feelings. I can't actually no matter how much I want to." He said looking away.

Justin pulled Ian close fixing his brown eyes on Ian's blue ones and understanding coursed through Justin.

"Well Ian... I know she's pretty and all... But she's with Blaise now and I am her best friend so I won't help you break them up if that's what you're asking." Justin said resolutely.

Ian just looked at him with a confused look on his face and shook his head when he realized what Justin was talking about.

"I'm not referring to Susan, Justin." He said calmly.

"Then who?" Justin asked genuinely confused.

Ian closed in and firmly placed his lips on Justin's, their tongues touched briefly as their mouths moulded to fit each other's. They kissed passionately for a few moments till Ian gently backed away and stared at Justin.

"You..." Ian said quietly before turning around and walking away, leaving a dumbstruck Justin in his wake.

"Ian kissed me." He said flatly to Susan.

"HE WHAT!" Susan exclaimed and everyone turned to look at them but she immediately apologized and looked at a flustered and angry Justin.

"Go ahead and announce it to the world wouldn't you?" He said angrily.

"Sorry Jus..." Susan said quietly.

Justin sighed and nodded, accepting her apology and Susan chirped up, "So, details! How did it happen?"

Justin shook his head, "I'm not exactly sure what happened Suse. I thought he was trying to get my help to break you up with Blaise, I

thought he liked you or something, how the hell was I supposed to know, he liked me?"

"Well, he kissed you didn't he?" Susan said reassuringly.

"I don't think he meant to, he's so confused and I don't need someone confused and ashamed as a lover." Justin said confidently.

Susan nodded understandingly, "How about you give him a chance Jus? If he doesn't try to restart anything and pretends like nothing happened, you know your answer, if he does, then cross that bridge when it comes. Have a little faith Jus..."

Justin nodded and smiled relieved, "Thanks Suse, I guess I just needed to talk to someone."

Susan smiled and pecked him on the cheek, "Anytime Jus, you know that."

Friday

Hogwarts Grounds, DA Assessment

04:00 PM

Neville Longbottom stared pointedly at the pedestal where Harry was explaining their beginner's Assessment. An obstacle course had been prepared and the beginners to make it out within twenty minutes would move up to Intermediate Level. Any exemplary beginners will be given the opportunity to be part of the Intermediate Assessment and perhaps move onto Advanced.

Neville clenched his jaw in determination and moved towards the entrance of the Beginner's Obstacle Course. A little further off, he saw Ginny looking equally determined about the race and wondered how Harry would assess her knowing full-well she was trying to separate him and Hermione.

Neville shrugged his shoulders, this was not the time to worry about such things.

He reviewed all the spells of attack and defence he had developed in the past month and made a mental inventory of them along with

the spells he had looked up himself and practiced with Daphne, Hermione and Harry on his own time.

He was ready for this, he knew it.

A soft hand clasped his shoulder and Neville immediately felt his residual nervousness ebb away. Only one person could have this sort of effect on him.

He turned around and smiled benevolently at the girl who had stolen his heart right from his chest with a single smile, Daphne Greengrass.

She looked at him prettily through her gorgeous eyelashes as her perfectly blonde hair was splayed beside her.

"Best of luck Neville, I know you can do this." She said smiling and Neville turned into a puddle of mush seeing the dainty dimple she made when smiling.

"Th-thanks..." he mumbled, congratulating himself on actually articulating something somewhat understandable in her presence.

Daphne smiled wider and shook her head wondering why she would always have this amazing effect on him. She came closer and felt his body tense and his breathing abruptly stop. She placed a feather light kiss on his lips and pulled back to see a completely glazed look on his face.

She placed a hand on his shoulder and he somehow, with a Herculean effort, managed to break from his state of dreaminess and concentrate on her, "Even if you doubt yourself, I have complete faith in you. So today, you are giving this assessment for me," she placed a hand on his cheek and pecked his lips again and finished with a hasty good luck and walked away with a blush creeping on her as well.

As soon as Daphne walked away, Neville immediately melted into pudding and Dean who was standing with Lavender behind him, held onto him so he wouldn't faint to the ground.

"Merlin Neville, get a grip!" He said supporting the near-unconscious boy's frame.

Lavender chuckled, "Can't blame a bloke for being madly in love."

Neville broke out of his state of paradise when Harry announced the Beginner's testing was about to begin.

"Thanks Dean." He muttered.

"No problem, just don't melt in there at the thought of her." Dean answered facetiously and Neville smiled and punched him playfully.

Neville stood at the beginning of the south end of the obstacle course. On hearing the loud, rumbling explosion from Flitwick's wand, he whipped out his wand and ran in headlong.

The entire course was a form of a maze, it reminded him somewhat of the Triwizard Maze from the previous year. He was quickly but cautiously making his way through; every time he reached a crossroads, he used the direction spell he picked up from Hermione.

"Point me!" He said to the wand outstretched on his palm and the wand twirled and pointed to the left.

He took the path and was amazed he hadn't met any obstacles till then. If it went on that way, he would be out in no time.

All too suddenly, his steps froze and he was unable to walk any further, being completely and utterly trapped on a patch on ground.

His eyes rolled downwards and he saw the telltale signs of a spell on the ground.

'Dammit what spell is it!' He thought furiously, unable to move a muscle.

He heard a sound coming from beside him and Ginny Weasley emerged from the left and was caught on the same path like him.

As she entered the glowing patch, the glow receded from below them and formed a wall around them. The two looked around at the glowing, translucent containment and a message appeared in the lights,

'Entered in a trap beware,
Leaving will be just as snared,
Duellers duel till victory comes,
The loser waits, the winner runs.'

"Well that's quite specific." Ginny said thoughtfully.

Neville looked at her confused and the full-weight of the writing dawned on him.

Ginny entered a duelling stance, her wand raised and her face determined. Neville copied her motions and faced her.

They both bowed simultaneously and looked up at each other.

"Winner moves on when he gets the loser's wand." Ginny said clearly.

"Loser stays till he can win a challenge from another." Neville responded completing the conditions.

They both nodded and taking three steps away from each other, began a duel of wit and determination.

"Rectumsemptra! Stupefy! Expelliarmus! Tallentegara! Stupefy!" Ginny sent a barrage of offensive spells at Neville, who took them all on his shield.

"Protego Maximus!" Neville's famous golden dome appeared around him, sheltering him from all offence perfectly. He had never felt this powerful before and he could never understand why he was able to create this dome when he thought of Daphne. Today he was fighting to win her favour, he would not lose!

"Petrificus Totalus! Lieremont Aera!" Neville sent in her direction.

Ginny created a perfect reflexive shield in the nick of time when her protego failed because of the body-bind. The wind blowing charm was rebounded upon the golden domed boy who buffeted it without batting an eye.

Ginny summed up her magic and sent a powerful stunner in his direction.

When she let it go she had only one thought in mind, 'I will not fail Harry!'

Neville saw the oncoming barrage and knew that if he kept his shield up much longer, he would exhaust himself magically, he cancelled the spell and dove for cover, narrowly avoiding the blood red stunner with only one thought in mind, 'I will not fail Daphne!'

Before he fell to the ground he yelled with all his might, envisioning a falling Ginny and a victorious Neville running to a proud Daphne and swayed his wand:

"Fieremont Totalus! Axilleremo!"

A fiery beast, not as well defined or as magically exhausting as the fire dragon Blaise had once produced, but strong nonetheless smashed into Ginny's reflective shield.

Ginny was completely caught off-guard by the spell, having never learnt it or even heard about it. It destroyed her shield and she out of terror cast an "Augmenti Maximus!" to protect herself.

A jet of water extinguished the beast but she barely managed to take a breath before Neville's second spell hit her. It clouded her vision and she couldn't see anything or anyone, she was trapped.

She furiously worked out the counter-charm, which for her own bad luck was six syllables long!

Neville picked that moment to fire a stunner at her that met its mark and Ginny fell to the ground, the blindness spell only just having been countered.

"Accio Ginny's wand!", Ginny's wand flew from her grasp and Neville caught it with a triumphant smile on his face.

He bent down and enervated her and she just looked at him with a defeated look.

He returned her wand and helped her up, the glowing walls descended to let him out and Ginny was still going to be stuck inside.

"Don't think badly of yourself Ginny, you very nearly had me, I was just lucky you didn't know the counter to that fire spell." Neville said kindly and Ginny smiled and nodded her head.

Neville swept out of the glowing beam's range and saw Ginny's face contort in fear as she was completely frozen till someone else came to duel her.

Neville chuckled to himself, he should've mentioned that to her... Oh well...

He turned a corner at breakneck speed and nearly crashed headlong into the one person he hoped against hope he would never have to see beyond necessity, Severus Snape.

"Well well well, Longbottom actually managed to make it this far, amazing work for a squib." Snape taunted.

Neville's face contorted in anger and realization stung, Snape would never be in a maze to help Harry test him, this was his greatest fear after all.

He raised his wand and with a perfect picture in mind yelled, "Ridikulus!"

The boggart-Snape's clothes changed completely from the usual sweeping black to a hot pink bikini and a model's body was under Snape's head.

Neville tilted his head sideways and truly observed the creation, 'I really wouldn't call this funny,' thought Neville with growing disgust, 'highly disturbing would be more like it...'

Either way, he left the bikini-clad Snape in his wake and headed forward coming face-to-face with several students up ahead, who were all stumped and arguing viciously.

He clambered forward, pushing through the crowd and read a message on the wall:

DEAD END

He looked at it thoughtfully and heard a Ravenclaw behind him gasp in realization.

"We have to stun someone!" Yelled Lisa Turpin, "or defeat them in duel, then only can we move on."

People looked at her with questioning glances until Dean looked around thoughtfully at the amassing students and said, "Well then guys, on the count of three duel!"

"One!" Screamed Parvati eagerly, wand raised.

"Two!" said Dean loudly, watching his back and front simultaneously.

"Three!" Came a barrage of voices and immediately, spells flew everywhere.

"Stupefy!"

"Tellentegara!"

"Rectumsemptra!"

"Langlock!"

"Levicorpus!"

The shouts and lights went on endlessly and some unlucky ones did stand at the receiving end. Neville ducked when a stray spell from Lavender missed Diana and flew over his head.

He saw Dean slump to the ground as a Slytherin stunned him from behind.

Neville sneered in anger, attacking from behind was not acceptable!

He saw the brunette Slytherin boy run to the dead end wall from where multiple students were making an exit by just passing through if they really had defeated someone.

He pointed his wand and sent a well-aimed stunner. The red light sailed through the marauding crowds and hit its mark square on the back of his head. The boy collapsed a few feet away from the DEAD END.

Neville smiled and quickly made his way there. Halfway to the wall, he turned around and sent an enervate to Dean's slumped form. When he saw Dean slowly stir, he turned back around and walked through the wall eagerly.

The feeling of walking through the completely stoned wall was excruciatingly similar to the pillar of Platform Nine-and-Three-quarters.

The other side though, was not what he expected.

An endless barrage of staircases that shifted ominously and far too quickly as compared to the Hogwarts stairs that constantly moved.

A girl, Ravenclaw by judging her robes, was standing staring at the moving stairs sceptically.

"Do you know which way to go?" Neville was normally averse to asking questions but in this case he was stumped and preferred help than just wandering around aimlessly.

The black-haired girl snapped her head to him and turned back to the staircases without answering, "It's a puzzle, because all the staircases have the same 360 degree movements. If you get on one, it has to be perfectly timed to the correct next one or else you'll get lost in the maze like some of those buffoons up there." She said exasperatedly.

Neville looked up and saw the 'buffoons' looking around confusedly, unable to decide which way to go.

She cleared her throat, "I have a proposition." Said the black-haired Ravenclaw girl.

Neville nodded uncertainly.

She looked on ahead and said clearly, "I know which way to take but I'll need your help." She pointed to the top of the staircases and

Neville followed her raised finger's direction to see a shining cloth piece hanging up there.

"That fabric is necessary to go on ahead because I checked the end of the room and it is blocked by a large contraption that has an opening big enough to accept a well-folded fabric piece." She said informatively.

Neville nodded, amazed by the sheer complexity and barrage of the spells and enchantments used for this test.

"Why not summon it?" He asked.

She tsked impatiently, "Of course! Summon it! A charms master like Flitwick worked his knobbly arse off to make these moving staircases and this incredible logical and magical puzzle only to be defeated by a summoning spell." She huffed indignantly.

Neville looked slightly taken aback and apologized. She looked at him with a quirked eyebrow and nodded, "I tried summoning it of course. Who knows it might've been that way but it didn't work."

"So how do we get up there?" Neville perked up.

Her eyes had a distant look and Neville noticed they were almost translucent blue eyes that contrasted sharply with her closely cropped black hair tied up in a stern McGonagall-like bun.

"The question is how to get it out when we get up there." She said calmly.

"Well no time like the present to find out." Neville said walking up there.

"Don't you want to know what you are jumping headlong into?" She asked incredulously.

"Again, no time like the present to find out." Neville said shyly.

She looked at him sceptically and followed and muttering something about 'impatient Godforsaken Gryffindors'.

She led the way and Neville followed as best as he could. Whenever she shifted directions on the stairways, he came behind her obediently and unquestioningly.

They were following a winding path but Neville was certain that the smart Ravenclaw had everything figured out in her head and she certainly did. Barely any time had passed than they were reaching the top staircase that was revolving violent on its own axis, not leading up to anything.

The girl stopped at the end of the second last staircase and turned around to face Neville with a mad gleam in her eyes.

"Its charmed to be resistant to most summoning magicks I believe, but how do we get it out?" She wondered aloud, not even slightly perturbed by the constant revolutionary motion of the staircase and Neville who was stationary for the first time in a while couldn't help but go green at the constant churning.

"Maybe..." he spluttered trying to get his mind off of hurling his lunch. "Maybe we have to physically reach it and bring it down."

The girl looked at him with wide eyes, "Ever the obvious, seems compounded with multiple complexities, obscuring the here and now." She muttered more to herself than Neville who just stared at her wide-eyed and confused.

She fixed her gaze on Neville and nodded confidently. The two then jumped onto the last, violently revolving staircase and made mad dashes for the cloth. Although, due to the heavily moving staircases and the constant whipping, they were pushed forward by momentum and were unable to get a clear grasp on the cloth that was always just a little out of their reach.

"Its hopeless!" She wailed after another failed attempt.

Neville was positively green at this point but had a calculating gleam in his eyes, "What if I levitate you to it?" He asked while trying to keep his balance.

She looked at him uncertainly, holding the railing with unimaginable force, "That's crazy enough to work. Anything to get me out of this place!"

Without another word Neville whipped out his wand and said the fated first-year spell, "Wingardium Leviosa!"

With one hand firmly grasping the railing of the revolving staircase and eyes fixed sorely on the Ravenclaw, he levitated her and in moments, her hand clasped onto the fabric. She pulled it out and another appeared in its place and before Neville could bring her down, she took it to.

Neville descended her onto the nearest staircase, away from the violently shuddering one to the best of his ability. She turned to him and counted her fingers, signalling him to jump at three. He nodded.

They jumped and glided and ran all the way to the bottom.

When they finally got down, the two walked unsteadily forward, just trying to get used to the non-moving flooring.

They neared the contraption the girl had mentioned earlier. It was a large steel box with a small opening just as she had described it.

The girl carefully approached it and slid her fabric into the machine, it glowed and groaned alive making an odd regurgitating sound. A light appeared on the opposite wall and Neville and the girl eyed it curiously.

Neville indicated she put the second one in as well and she complied. The opening grew and now the two of them could fit through easily.

They waded through proudly and with relief etched clearly on their faces.

As they made it out, they heard Lee Jordan's booming voice to the Intermediate and Advanced students waiting, "It's Neville Longbottom and Astoria Greengrass out of the maze first! A loud round of applause for them!"

Neville turned surprised to Astoria who smiled smugly at him, "You are Daphne's sister!"

She quirked her eye at him as if measuring his intelligence, "Well since we do share the same last name and have similar traits and characteristics, I'm assuming that's a given." She answered dryly.

"But... but you're a Ravenclaw!" He said again.

She shook her head in exaggerated exasperation, "And Daphne's a Slytherin and you are a Gryffindor. But if it placates you at all, the Sorting Hat almost put me in Slytherin, then decided Ravenclaw, deciding my intellect trumped ambition and cunning, though close to their levels."

He closed her mouth, understanding her facetious remarks for once and nodded, "I want to thank you, that was an amazing feat of magic and quite impressive. In fourth year, I barely managed to light a matchstick without hurting myself. I appreciate the guidance to get us out of there."

She looked at him oddly, "Oh..." Her eyes shifted nervously, "um... your welcome... I guess."

He nodded and turned to Harry and Hermione who hugged him eagerly and congratulated him on his show as he and Astoria were the only beginners to make it out within the time limit of fifteen minutes, thus, qualifying them for the Intermediate Level training, if they so wished.

Neville smiled brightly and nodded vigorously.

Harry walked up to Astoria as Hermione conversed with Neville, giving him some tips and advice.

"That was excellently done Astoria." Harry said loudly.

Immediately her posture changed from one of indifference to glowing pride, "Thank you Harry" she said confidently.

Harry smiled gently and extended the same offer to her, "You made it out in fifteen minutes, you can compete with the Intermediate Levels if you want."

Astoria's face lit up and she smiled widely, "I'd love to!"

He nodded and going in for a handshake to congratulate her on her amazing victory. Astoria's smile widened further but before she registered it was a handshake she leaned forward and pressed her lips lightly on Harry's.

Harry froze shock evident on his face as Astoria leaned away and batted her eyelids, "Thanks for your congratulations Harry." With that she turned around and walked away.

Harry stared dumbly at her retreating form and shaking his head with a wry expression turned back to Hermione, deciding to gloss over this particular development for the time being.

Friday

DA Assessment on Hogwarts Grounds

06:00 PM

Susan stared dispassionately at her regular opponents and new ones as well. The Intermediate Assessment had been brutal with only a handful of students making it through their duels unscathed. The rounds were no rounds and barely any rules. It was mad and crazy attack and assault. Ten Intermediate level students per round and the last man or woman standing would go on to the next round of ten groupings till the last six students were left who were the only ones to qualify for the Advanced Level and had all chosen to be part of the Advanced Assessment when offered.

They now had eight duos facing each other off at the new Advanced Assessment: the powerful Gryffindor Couple Harry and Hermione, the ever-dangerous Fred and George, the aggressive and balanced Justin and Ian, the silent but lethal Luna and Draco and finally the evenly divided team of herself and Blaise.

She smiled when thinking about Blaise, he had brought so much light into her previously safe but shell of a life. His witty ire and cold determination and vast intellect, not to mention strong stature with a chest she could never stop feeling and his big, black... Susan smiled with a twinkle in her eye thinking about 'Mini Zabini' as she liked to call it sometimes.

Focusing back on her task she wondered what the three new teams would be like: Seamus Finnigan and Helen Maneffa from Hufflepuff, Cho Chang and Padma Patil and Daphne Greengrass and (to her intense surprise) Neville Longbottom.

She was very weary of Longbottom since he had come a long way, or so it seemed, from being the little boy afraid of even his own shadow. He had advanced from Beginner to Advanced in one assessment, a feat to be proud of. However, he was going to learn the hard way what being in Advanced was all about.

The battle that raged between the eight teams was nothing short of scary. At many points Flitwick was on the verge of calling it off, seeing it increasingly driven towards a stalemate but stopping every time deciding to see where it headed. Susan and Blaise were locked in conflict with Cho and Padma and Susan was hard pressed to prevent herself from rolling her eyes at them. Cho was throwing offensive spells left, right and centre and Blaise was not even affected because Susan was after all a human shield. Still, the supposedly bright Ravenclaw didn't even realize her folly and kept firing anyway. Patil should be correcting as is her duty as a partner, but then again, they were bunched together as partners and hadn't had the training and experience they did. With one decisive spell, Blaise blasted Cho off of her feet and Padma defending herself specifically from Blaise and not even registering that Cho was capable of attack was caught off-guard when Susan's blatant stunner hit her hard and she fell.

Sparks flew from Flitwick's wand indicating the first of eight teams to fall.

Luna, who was nearby just grinned at Susan and rolled her eyes at Cho and Padma and Susan couldn't help but smile back.

"Weasleys!" Said Blaise catching her full and undivided attention as she threw up another shield.

Blaise was battling it out with Fred or George and Susan let her attention travel to the rest of the field. Justin, Ian, Neville and Daphne were engaged in a heated battle, the newly Advanced duo doing wonders with their offence.

Hermione, Harry, Draco, Luna, Seamus and Helen were locked into a threeway struggle, with the former two pairs concentrating more on each other, probably trying to unlock the stalemate from before.

That's when it all happened at once, Longbottom sent a spell that went wayward of Thompson and crashed into Maneffa who fell as an empty heap. Seamus, barely registering the loss of his shield fired a barrage of curses at Draco and Luna. Luna was focused completely on Hermione and breaking Harry's shield and didn't notice the oncoming spells, Draco did. He realized the split second after it was too late so he did what he could do which was much better than seeing an unconscious Luna, he jumped in the way. The stunners hit him, hard.

When Draco fell, all duelling stopped for a second and Luna just looked at his thumped body with dreaminess.

Then all hell broke loose.

"!" She wailed.

Luna threw her wand to the ground and with a focused determination, Susan had never seen in the normally distracted girl's eyes, she threw raw, unconstrained magic at the surprised Gryffindor.

A mad burst of light cracked and charged towards Finnagin who finally noticed his shield had been trumped for a while. He erected a shield but it turned to putty in the wake of the awesome power of Luna's magic. The blow didn't stop at encompassing Finnagin, it sailed forward to Ian and Justin and destroyed Ian's perfect mirroring shield.

Susan knew for certain those two were gone. She was so engrossed in the happenings around her, she barely realized when Blaise snapped her out of it and demanded she pay attention on their own battle with the infamous Weasleys.

That realization struck a second too late as Fred (or George) fired a stunner that caught Blaise off guard and he slumped to the ground.

Susan looked at the twins who were cackling madly. Her gaze shifted and horror engulfed her when she saw Luna's outburst head in their direction after passing through Longbottom and Greengrass.

It was only her exceptional ability with shield charms that saved her arse as the sheer power of the outburst completely decimated the Weasleys' defence and triumph at besting Blaise in his moment of distraction.

The outburst finally dissipated and Flitwick, with a trembling hand, sent sparks indicating the fall of three teams with a single attack.

Luna locked eyes with Susan and the two nodded. Susan jumped to her side and cast multiple shielding charms, barraging their defence as Harry and Hermione came back into the fighting with a newfound vigour. Luna responded to each attack with mad strength and uncontained fury.

'Note to self,' thought Susan wryly, 'never be a prick to Lovegood...'

Neville and Daphne fought valiantly, trying their best to tip the scales in their favour being considered the underdogs. Hermione and Luna both frustrated by their attempts sent stunners at each. Hermione's stunner broke their shield and Luna's was a surprise as it was a field stunner that struck the duo simultaneously and ended their attack.

Flitwick raised his wand again, indicating the fall of another team and then sent red jets of light to the sky ending the duel.

He approached the platform and spoke loudly to all the awestruck students.

"As per rules of teamed duels, when only three teams are left, the duel ends. The winners are Mr. Evans-Potter and Ms. Granger for being the only team that survived the entire duel intact. I think it would be agreeable to award Ms. Lovegood and Mr. Mal...uh...Mr... Draco... second position," he stuttered there, unsure of how to continue but he recovered quickly as people looked around awkwardly, "as they were exceedingly brilliant and Ms. Lovegood performed an amazing feat of magic that took out most parties in this particular duel. Therefore, the third and final place goes to Ms. Bones and Mr. Zabini."

There was a modest amount of clapping and cheering and Harry approached the podium.

He cast a sonorous on himself and spoke to the assembled crowd, "Congratulations to all you whether you moved to the next level or not. There were some amazing feats of magic performed here that you all should be very proud about. Now as per the next sessions—"

"HARRY POTTER!" Came the loud, sickly sweet squeal of a woman Harry had no intention of dealing with.

He rolled his eyes and looked towards her, "Yes Professor?"

"What is the meaning of this?" She asked sweetly but with barely concealed rage.

"This, professor," he said extending his hand to his students, "is a perfectly legalized gathering under school rules and legal statutes, something that has been running for about a month now, something you knew about."

Her anger burst forth, "Headmaster's office now!"

Harry just sighed and asking Hermione to take over moved off with Umbitch.

"As per the rest of you, go back to your dorms!" She ordered callously.

"Its only 7 PM professor," said Flitwick of all people, "school rules state that curfew for all 4th-years and above begins at 9 PM."

She squinted her eyes at Flitwick angrily who just smiled back serenely.

Susan watched Harry being taken away by Umbridge and even as Hermione issued instructions and congratulated everyone, her fear and anxiety were obvious.

This was turning out to be an interesting day.

TBC

A review would make me smile and update faster. ;) SO REVIEW!

AHHH! Cliffy! Please don't kill me, I couldn't write more, it was becoming too long! 28 pages on a word doc for crying out loud!

Before you point it out, yes Astoria is a lot younger in canon and a Slytherin, but this is the point of AU right. Changes... especially tiny things like virtually non-existent characters' ages and houses and abilities.

Next chapter is going to be a biggy! Like ultra-biggy! The war looming on the edge is finally beginning and the Ministry is going to be shattered into action. The Night Foxes are to make a re-entry and the story is to pick up from where it left off before all these minor stories came into the picture. Honestly, I don't even know why I let them distract me so much...

Oh and a shit load more of Harry-Hermione whom I find have been ignored in these last two chapters and the story is after all about them...

Officially 12,000+ words! You guys are slave-drivers! ;)

Love you guys to death!

Kisses,

Gatonio.

Chapter 12

Faith in the Weekend from Hell – Part 2

DECEMBER – DÉCEMBRE – DISUMBUR

JANUARY – JANVIER – JANVARI

FEBRUARY – FÉVRIER – FURVARI

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Hospital Wing

10.00 AM

Harry just sat there wondering how everything had gone by so fast.

There were people falling all around, a mark rising in the sky, black-clad figures rushing about and innocent students running helter-skelter for cover.

Amidst that craziness and hysteria, the singular, lone, defeated figure of Harry Potter sat crouched over his lover, shaking her. Tears freely streamed down his eyes as he refused to accept what had just happened.

"Hermione! Hermione! HERMIONE!"

He shook his head dissipating those evil thoughts.

Harry sighed deeply as his throat hitched and another bout of sobs almost escaped him. He had been sitting there for hours now, time seemed of little value since the incident.

He looked from his place beside her bed. Even thinking of her name caused him to cry in pain.

He got up from his seat and busied himself around her bedside, keeping everything in order, just as she would like it, after all, when she would get up, he'd be in a world of pain if everything wasn't perfect. The flowers were bluish-purple orchids, her favourite. The drapes were a light Gryffindor red with tints of rich gold along the

fringes, her favourite. He knew she would grace him with millions of kisses for the simple gesture as soon as she woke up and saw them. He would do anything for one of her kisses, there were languid and perfect, just like her. The bed-sheet was a perfect, crisp white, without a single stain, just like she preferred things. Everything was absolutely perfect, just completely wrong at the same time.

But he wouldn't think about that, no, never! She will be fine, even if Harry had to go to the nether world and steal a cure for her. But he wasn't too worried, Madame Pomfrey would fix her up in a jiffy. He smiled widely and bent down to place a feather-light kiss on her sweet forehead and ran his hands through her hair lovingly, humming softly to the tune of Come What May.

"Harry..." Came a hesitant voice from behind him.

Harry closed his eyes briefly as he was accustomed to doing involuntarily whenever someone interrupted him during his time with Hermione.

This was supposed to be his time, his time of peace and isolation, his time to believe that everything in the world would be fine, everything would be perfect and dandy. He would get up every morning to the sound of Hermione's soft heartbeat and have her chide him for not getting ready on time, then kiss him soundly to make up for the admonishing. They would have a family someday and they would squabble over the names of their children: he would be determined to name them after her and she would be determined to name them after him or his parents or anything that would bring them closer to being a Potter and his children. She would wear the necklace he was going to give her for Christmas; it had a turquoise butterfly in the centre surrounded by onyx and emerald gemstones, her favourites.

This time everyday was his time to dream and believe in the impossible and unbelievable. This was their time of the day and someone was encroaching on it, invariably for some monumentally important reason, but interrupting nonetheless. But he couldn't find it in himself to be angry at whoever it was; after all, they all knew he didn't want any interruptions at this time. Whenever they did interrupt it was because they had no choice. He couldn't be angry, he shouldn't be angry, but he was.

"What?" He snapped back without turning around.

There was an odd shifting noise and Harry knew he was being irrational and making his poor friend nervous. He took a deep breath and calmed his centre like he was accustomed to doing when in times of stress, when everything threatened to overwhelm him. When he remembered... NO! He will NOT think about it!

He turned and saw the figure of a very uncomfortable Astoria Greengrass standing in front of him.

She spoke in a hushed monotone, as if she were in a sacred place, intruding on a holy ritual. Her eyes didn't leave the ground even once as she relayed her message, quickly and efficiently.

"They've attacked Diagon Alley."

Harry nodded and she left.

Harry turned around and faced his love, his dream world crashing with reality and reality was winning the battle.

He took in Hermione's prone form: her thin body covered in patient clothes, her lips slightly parted, her soft breath as she seemed to be asleep, her wild hair splayed along the mattress around her, the hair he painstakingly brushed whenever he could. She was... so beautiful... and empty.

With tears stinging his eyes, Harry turned towards the door with a single message thrown back to Hermione, it ended up coming out as a weak sob but he had to say it as was tradition.

"I'll see you later love. I promise."

He felt the weight of those words settle in on himself. Those were the last words she had said to him before he was torn between his dreams and reality. Those were her last words of calming encouragement following one of her perfect kisses. Those words meant so much to him that he said to her every time he left her bedside only to count the hours he would have to wait before returning there. It was his sanctuary, she was his sanctuary.

These were the thoughts that gave him any measure of comfort before he stepped out of the doors of the Hospital Wing, wand in hand, and all sadness evaporated from his face as determination and hardness set in.

On the inside he was dying, he was crying and grieving uncontrollably.

"There is no cure Harry..."

"It's your fault she's dead!"

"Let her move on, you can't keep her here just for your sake..."

"She wouldn't have wanted this..."

"Get over it Harry!"

Thoughts, words, scenes, actions: a jumble of these splayed through his mind as he remembered and replayed that weekend from so long ago. Seeing every detail, every scream, drop of blood and fear.

Three months had passed since that horrible weekend.

Three months since Voldemort had declared himself and the Wizarding World was in a frenzied state.

Three months since Dumbledore had given up trying to control him.

Three months... since Hermione Granger had last opened her eyes...

Every image, every event, every documented second was crystal clear in his mind.

Mindlessly, Harry walked through the doors of the Great Hall. The sight he met confounded him and comforted him simultaneously. They stood in front of him, all the people that supported him and their cause. Willing to fight and willing to die.

Harry took in a deep breath and calmed himself, he opened his eyes and fixed his onlookers with his ever-present determination. The lustre of his green eyes had a magnetic pull that made him a leader.

"We know our positions, we know our protocol. Code Black! Move people!" He boomed.

In a flurry of motion, everyone ran through various areas: some to newly installed apparition points, others to fireplaces and some grabbing brooms and kicking off.

Harry was falling, he could not do this; but he had to. Harry breathed deeply as he allowed the memories to pilfer through his meticulously designed mind shields, chuckling darkly to himself all the while. There was a time when Occlumency had proven to be his saviour from nightmares and Voldemort's freakish control. How quickly, the sharpness of his mind created by finely tuned Occlumency shields now made him able to recall every minute detail with clarity. It was beautiful. It was horrifying. It was pleasure. It was mind-numbingly torturous.

He was sinking into depression.

He was sinking into buried memories.

He was sinking back to that weekend.

Tears stung his eyes as he moved three months back in time in less than three milliseconds, back to the Weekend from Hell.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Headmaster's Office

09:00 PM

Harry's breath came in calm inhalations as he followed Umbridge through the intricacies of the Castle of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. She led him up to the seventh floor and in front of the large Gargoyle statue that guarded the Headmaster's Office.

Harry rolled his eyes in annoyance. Great, just great! Old Goat, idiotic minister and Umbitch all in one night, clearly some things from the previous timeline never truly changed. Harry just hoped that the outcome would be the same and Dumbles would be forced to running away from the school.

"Lima Beans" Umbridge told the statue that roared to life and leaped aside.

Harry followed Umbridge's pink behind, retching at the sight of it and the thought of Dumbledore actually setting his password as Lima Beans: for the love of God they were horrendous!

As they approached the door, Harry could hear sounds of people arguing coming from inside.

"Clearly you are mad Dumbledore if you think we believe anything different!"

Harry's mind cleared and he just smirked: Fudge was pissed, right on time.

Umbridge knocked on the door and led Harry in, pushing him forward to see the red-faced minister and resigned Headmaster, looking at said minister with no small amount of pity.

"Ah Mr. Potter, good evening to you, I trust all examinations of the Defence Club went off without a hitch?" Dumbledore said cheerfully.

Harry just nodded and looked at Fudge with a raised eyebrow.

"Good evening Minister. To what do I owe your esteemed presence?" Harry asked with heavily unveiled sarcasm in his tone.

Fudge, if possible, became redder and Umbridge became rigid by Harry's side, clasping his shoulder with increasing force.

"I have come to demand why, despite Madame Umbridge's instruction, a Defence Club has been set up, solely to defy the Ministry?"

Harry chuckled and everyone regarded him oddly, "Really Minister? Do you honestly believe everything that we do in Hogwarts is

somehow a covert attempt to takeover a position you are anyway going to lose?"

Fudge spluttered, "MR. POTTER!"

"That's Duke Evans-Potter-Black-Lupin to you Minister Fudge. I find it to be an agreeable request to ask you to refer to me by my name as it is, instead of degrading contractions." Harry stated, flawlessly polite despite his rising temper.

Fudge seemed to calm himself down with deep breaths and spoke up, "Very well Duke Evans-Potter-Black-Lupin, as Minister, I demand to know why there is a supposed Defence Club set up when there is nothing to combat in times of peace, unless students are being coerced into making this decision?"

Harry took a deep breath and fixed the Minister with an icy stare that effectively made him shift uncomfortably, "I can assure you Minister, every member in this Club has joined upon their own free will, united by a common goal to be prepared. As to why learning combat magic? Well Minister, even if the Ministry denies it, Lord Voldemort has returned and is alive and kicking!"

Harry knew that would be the last statement he'd be able to say before all the gasps at the name and looks of outrage on Fudge and Umbridge's faces.

"Duke!" Screamed Umbridge angrily, "Detention for spreading lies!"

Harry just shook his head in disbelief.

He looked at the Minister and spoke as calmly as he could, "Minister, when Voldemort attacked Godric's Hollow on the Halloween of 1981, was his body ever recovered?"

Fudge looked surprised by the question but stopped to consider it, "No Duke."

Harry nodded, "With no body to truly prove his death, how can one assume he really died? His inactivity could be attributed to a lot of reasons. Now can you honestly, with a clear conscience, say that all these recent attacks, all of them, are a culmination of a resurgent Death Eaters who've resurged for no reason identifiable, and the

attacks in general are very specific: Muggles, muggleborns and half-bloods. All of it points to one direction Minister..." Harry's voice trailed off and the Minister was back to looking disgruntled.

"I believe what I see Duke Potter. This club ends now!" With that Fudge turned around and disappeared through the floo.

Umbridge just stood there smug as ever.

"I'll see you in detention Duke." With that sickly sweet threat, she turned and left the Headmaster's office, leaving Harry alone with the manipulative Old Coot.

"He's frightened isn't he?" Harry said after a long pause of not talking between the two.

Dumbledore just nodded.

Harry looked at Dumledore oddly, the Dumbledore he remembered was one to always offer up advice and orders, this man, was not that Dumbledore.

"What changed Headmaster?" Harry asked genuinely curious.

Dumbledore looked up and faced Harry for the first time, "An old man realized his folly and is trying to make amends. To quote my eloquent Deputy and your, might I say, exceptionally protective Head of House, if I were to 'try and off you again, there would be Hell to pay and she would be Charon, but she would drown me in Styx rather than get me across'. That along with some other very ingenious and to be honest, disturbingly detailed and well thought-out threats, effectively shocked me into submission. Also having to make an Unbreakable Vow with your Head of House to never interfere with you again without your express permission."

Harry was truly surprised by this admission; he was finding it hard to believe that one stern 'talking-to' with Minerva had provided such unbelievable results.

Then Harry thought of something else, "Why did you listen to her, you could've easily refused?"

Dumbledore looked at Harry with sad eyes, "My reasons for following through with her... 'requests'... are twofold: firstly, hell hath no fury like Minerva McGonagall's threats that she fully intended to fulfil, Minerva never makes idle threats and to be honest Harry, castration did not bode well with me."

Despite himself Harry chuckled at that, "Surely Professor she was not serious."

Dumbledore looked at him sharply, "I have known Minerva for more years than you have known life my boy, as a student of mine, as an apprentice, as a colleague, a friend and a formidable witch. But moreover, I have seen her exact revenge and I can assure you, she has done worse and while fully meeting her specific threats."

Harry's jaw locked at that, thinking of his stern Head of House actually castrating Dumbledore, while hilarious, was extremely nauseating and something he rather not think about.

"My Second reason is your prophecy, you made it clear, in no uncertain terms, that The Manipulator will fall. Many adjectives may describe me, Duke Evans-Potter, but foolish is not one of them. I was ready to accept my fall." He finished defeatedly.

Harry bit back a chuckle; that prophecy was not meant to be taken so seriously or literally.

"Professor?" Harry said tentatively.

"Yes Duke?" Dumbledore said quietly.

"I think you have fulfilled your part of the prophecy." Harry said earnestly, still trying not to laugh.

Dumbledore looked at him curiously.

"What do you mean My Lord?" He said expressing his confusion.

Harry copied Hermione's patronizing teacher-mode while explaining, "The Manipulator will fall can be interpreted in several ways: within the past year, you have lost your positions as Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot and Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards. All those people that once saw the sun

rise and set with your words, now see you as a crazy, old man. Even your position as Headmaster of your beloved school has been compromised by...external forces. Finally, you have foregone your obsession with trying to mould me into a venerable weapon against Voldemort and even made an Unbreakable Vow to see to it that I make the right decision for myself by myself. I think as a Manipulator and overall control-freak, you have definitely fallen, sir."

Dumbledore smiled despite the slight, and nodded.

"Now sir, will you be willing to tutor some of us in advanced defence? We could use the training in future conflicts." Harry said kindly.

Dumbledore's eyes lit up and his dwindled twinkle came back in full force, "It would be an honour Duke." He said presenting his hand to shake Harry's.

"Harry, just Harry." Harry answered shaking Dumbledore's hand.

As Harry walked away from the Headmaster's office, the implications of his actions crashed down on him. It was all so simple when he was sent back originally, but now everything was so much more complicated. Harry took a deep breath, he still had to face his biggest challenge of the night: Hermione and telling her about his new and improved relation with the Previously-manipulative-Old-Goat.

With leaded steps, Harry made his way to Gryffindor Common Room and to the arms of his bushy-haired lover.

"Lionheart" He said to the portrait of the Fat Lady that swung open to grant him entrance.

"Harry!" Came a shrill shriek.

Harry redoubled his efforts to keep his calm.

"Mate!"

"Are you okay?"

"What did she want?"

The questions kept coming and Harry braced himself to answer them, which he did in rapid succession, not even realizing he wasn't stopping his explanation to take a breath.

Then, after what seemed like a while, Harry looked around to see that Hermione was not in this group.

"Where's Hermione?" he asked confusedly.

The others looked around guiltily.

Lavender spoke up, "She told us to tell you to find her where the meetings were used to being held, before chaos ensued." Lavender ended in a very worried tone; obviously she was worried about the sanity of her dorm mate.

Harry chuckled and nodded. "I'll go meet her."

He exited the Common Room and made his way to the Room of Requirement where the DA Meetings were held in secret in the previous timeline before Chaos sent him back in time to fix everything.

Harry stood in front of the empty wall beside the statue of Barnabas teaching trolls how to do the ballet and obviously failing miserably.

He walked back and forth the three times thinking, 'I must find Hermione, I must find Hermione, I must find Hermione'.

At the third pace, a plain door materialized, Harry turned the knob and walked in. There was a simple couch beside a roaring fire and Hermione Granger sat comfortably and snugly, her legs tucked under her chin. Her brown hair splayed across her lap as she read a book, her brown eyes shining with keen curiosity as she turned the pages at what Harry can only describe as an ungodly speed.

Harry took a deep breath he didn't even know he was holding. Whenever he was around her, all the tiredness just seemed to ebb away.

"Mione..." He said dreamily and she broke from her trance with her book to look up at him. Her delicate eyebrows rose in surprise but

her face cracked into a beautiful smile when she registered whom it was invading her sanctuary. Her smile widened seeing the dazed look on Harry's face as he looked at her with no small amount of love and adoration and, dare she admit it, admiration.

"Harry?" She answered quickly without dragging out his name as if it were a sigh.

Harry walked up to where she was sitting and calmly sat himself beside her on the couch. He extended his hands and Hermione instinctively dropped her book and eased into his embrace. She rested her head on his hard chest as he played with her hair that he seemed to always have a fascination for.

They stayed like that for a while, her in his arms, snuggled together, not uttering a word despite Hermione having millions of questions on the night's occurrences, she knew Harry was not in the mood to talk about such things. She could always ask him in the morning.

Harry slowly moved away all of her hair from the side of her neck and placed a soft kiss there. Hermione's entire frame shivered as he dropped several more kisses on her bare skin. He then dropped his nose into the nape of her neck and snuggled there while she shivered feeling his warm breath so close to her.

"Mione... I love you..." He said quietly and Hermione moved closer to his embrace.

"I love you too Harry." She answered warmly.

With that said, Harry lifted Hermione up and to her surprise the room changed to a bedroom from a sitting room. There was a large king-sized bed in the centre of the room and Harry placed Hermione in the centre of it. He then climbed in with her, hugging her tightly and refusing to let her go.

Hermione for the most part was confused. She wasn't nervous to share a bed with Harry, she trusted him to respect her boundaries, which she knew he did. But she was also concerned about his mood. He had barely said anything except that he loved her and held onto her for dear life after saying so.

Harry raised his head from Hermione's side and dropped a kiss on Hermione's lips. With that one kiss, all coherent thoughts effectively left her mind as all she could comprehend at that moment was the feel of Harry's soft lips moving in tandem with hers.

They kissed softly for a few minutes. Harry lovingly devoured her lower lip, nibbling gently but with vigour. Hermione responded in kind by rocking his body with sensations with her ministrations on his bottom lip. Harry moved closer to her by being directly above her, supporting his weight on his two hands, and kissing her with increasingly wild abandon.

Then the kiss deepened, Hermione carefully flicked her tongue in Harry's mouth and Harry was undone. He quickly opened wide and allowed her free passage. Soon it was the dance of the devil as the two lovers moved from side to side of the bed, trying to win dominance in their never-ending kiss.

Harry lowered his hands instinctively and traced the perfect frame of Hermione's outline. He let his hands move from her side to cover her breasts and Hermione took a sharp intake of breath.

Harry smiled; it was going to be a long night...

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Great Hall

11:00 AM

Harry howled angrily when he thought of that terrible night, that wonderful night, that beautiful and painful night. The first and last night he had been close to his Hermione.

He turned once again and faced the rest of the students who were still awaiting instructions.

Seamus and Juliet walked up to him followed closely by Cho, Padma and Susan Bones.

"Harry...?" Susan said with a slight tremble.

Harry looked at the buxom strawberry blonde with some trepidation. Over the months that Hermione had... been unavailable, Susan and he had gotten quite close. It also helped that she was somewhat going through the same pain as he. But he knew better than to bring up the snake that betrayed them all. Harry could never understand how he trusted someone who was obviously a complete bastard with something so incredibly important. But then again, he always trusted in people once, yet unlike a certain Greater Good-obsessed old man, he only trusted once and that was it.

"Suse... I need you to lead a strong division with the Aurors from behind Gringotts. Tonks can side-along apparate with those who cannot. I want a hidden attack, with as many victories as possible Suse, no excuses." Harry ordered lightly.

He knew Susan wasn't one to fail. In fact, judging by her performances till date, she was growing to be one of the best Generals Wizarding Britain had ever seen, her tactical and instinctive sense of battle was unfathomable.

Susan nodded grimly and left to choose her division and head to the main attacking area.

Harry walked to the side and observed the large map in front of the Hall, it was a map loosely designed around the Marauder's Map, but it encompassed all of Great Britain. Lupin and Sirius had been working on it for a little over two months but the end result was outstanding. Harry touched on London and the map enlarged. He touched on Diagon Alley and the map enlarged further showing the Death Eater raid there. It seemed that the Apothecary had been blown up and so had Madam Malkin's but the rest of the Alley was still intact.

Harry saw a name that sent a chill down his spine. The second he saw that name, all rational thought evaded him. Harry turned around and marched to his two best friends and Godfather who were prepping some Aurors about tactical attacks.

"Dray! Nev! Siri!" He called.

Neville Longbottom, formerly Draco Malfoy and ex-convict Sirius Black turned to look at him with surprised eyes.

Harry looked at them with a familiar anger and inexplicable rage in his eyes.

"She's there, its time for some revenge." Harry said with determination trying (but failing) to keep the venom out of his voice.

Draco looked apologetic, Neville looked determined and Sirius' lip turned up into a casual smirk.

"Lets go get her head to hang on our Wall." Sirius said in black humour and Harry laughed.

The four men turned and walked to the fireplace.

"Diagon Alley!" Neville yelled and walked through the fire to the Order's safe-point beyond the flames.

Draco and Sirius followed suit.

As Harry picked the floo powder to follow through he had only one thought in mind, the death of The Bitch and avenging of his love, who had been in a magically-induced coma for three months.

'I will kill you bitch!' Was what Harry thought as he threw the powder, "Diagon Alley!"

The green flamed engulfed him as he made it through to their safe-point with only one thought in mind about today's raid: unavoidable death or permanent incapacitation of The Bitch.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Room of Requirement

11:30 AM

It was morning and Harry knew it was morning because light came permeating through the wished windows of the Room of Requirement bathing Hermione and Harry in its light.

Harry smiled lazily as he lightly shook his lover from her dreamlike state.

"Wake up love." He said lovingly.

Hermione stirred and clicked her tongue in annoyance.

"Harry...!" She said in irritation, "Its too early, lemme sleep." She mumbled.

Harry chuckled as he got out of bed, "Its almost noon, love, we have hurry if we want to get to Hogsmeade and do some shopping."

Hermione groaned and covered herself with the blanket, tightening into a cocoon, "Sleep now, Hogsmeade sod off!"

Harry raised his eyebrows, "Hermione Granger! Language!" He said in mock shock.

Hermione looked at him with sleep-laden eyes, "Too early to care." She mumbled.

Harry boomed with laughter as he jumped onto bed and Hermione shifted towards him, resting her head on his side falling back to sleep. Harry just sat there for a few moments admiring her beauty before shaking out of his stupor and grinning slyly.

"We're going 'Mione, whether you like it or not!" He said as he wrapped the blankets around and picked her up.

Hermione squealed and shook violently in his arms, but Harry easily lifted her up bridal style and with one quick thought the Room transformed into a large bathroom and Harry dumped Hermione in the pool-sized tub, fully-clothed.

Hermione 'eeped' and shrieked at the sudden contact with water and jumped up beyond the surface, glaring at Harry in a way that almost made him swoon... Almost.

Harry folded his arms in defiance as Hermione continued to glare.

"You are not getting an apology out of me if that's what you want!" He said turning his head away dramatically.

Hermione smiled equally slyly, "Never said I wanted an apology," she said innocently.

Harry looked at her from the corner of his eye, eyeing her suspiciously.

Hermione's smile widened and with a swoosh of her wand that was underwater, she pushed Harry into the water and he fell in with a noticeable splash.

Hermione laughed loudly and raucously as Harry's head emerged from the water, his hair a complete mess framing his wet face as his clothes clung to his skin.

He glared at her as she continued to laugh.

When she finally stopped laughing and looked at him, her wide grin diminished a fraction.

Harry looked at her with anger, irritation and a certain amount of lust.

"You are so dead Granger!" He said loudly and lunged for her.

"EEP!" Hermione squealed involuntarily as Harry grabbed hold of her and snogged her senseless.

Hermione pushed him off and he fell dramatically in another part of the pool-tub. Hermione laughed loudly as she scrambled out of the pool and closing her eyes, imagined a GIRLS ONLY changing room.

As soon as the mini room materialized in the bigger bathroom, Hermione scrambled in and shut the door with a BANG before Harry could reach her.

"No fair 'Mione!" He said exasperatedly with his arms crossed in front of him and his pout on completely.

"All is fair in love and war, my dear Harry, and this, is war!" Came her voice from 'beyond the door'.

Harry tried to open the door but it wouldn't budge and Hermione laughed hearing his attempts.

"Stop trying Harry!" She chided.

Harry once again assumed his sulking stance: arms crossed and lip quivering in a pout.

"Stop pouting and acting like a child, you asked for it Potter!" Came her voice from inside.

Harry was surprised by her newest command.

'How did she know?' He thought, not realizing he said it aloud.

Hermione wrenched open the door and faced Harry with a large smile on her face and large, mirth-filled eyes, chocolate orbs that were enough to drown Harry in their melting goodness.

"I know you better than you know yourself Mister!" Came her response and Harry smiled widely.

Hermione looked at him oddly and smiled back, but poked him expecting a retaliation, but none came.

Her brow scrunched up into a cutest crease Harry had ever seen as she analyzed the various possibilities for his lack of response.

"What?" She asked a bit worried by Harry's unflinching smile.

"Nothing." He said knowing that she would drive herself (and him) spare to find out, curiosity kills, but when it comes to Hermione Granger its downright murderous.

"You will tell me HARRY EVANS-POTTER!" She said through clenched teeth and sparkling curiosity.

Harry sighed, "How about I tell you after we get back from Hogsmeade, tonight, at dinner?"

Hermione considered her options and figured Harry probably had a reason for wanting to leave it till then. It was perhaps a grand gesture and Hermione was a sucker for grand gestures.

She smiled genially, "Okay!"

Harry copied her smile right back, relieved that she giving him the rest of the day to make everything perfect.

He closed in and kissed her sweetly on her forehead, then nose, and then a full-blown snog.

Slowly, carefully, with measured breath, the two split, breathing very heavily, Harry's forehead resting on Hermione's.

"We need to go," Hermione said through lidded eyes, desire clearly visible in them.

"Uh-huh..." Was Harry's intelligent response as he closed in for another kiss.

Hermione backed away a bit, "I'm serious, everyone's probably waiting!" She said gaining some semblance of control over the situation.

Harry's hands wound around her waist to keep her from escaping and pulled her closer, "Whatever you say..." He barely mumbled as he came closer to her lips.

When he was but a hair's breadth away from her sweet, soft lips Hermione asked, "But Harry?"

"What?" He said with unbelievable desire.

Hermione's lust vanished and was replaced with a mischievous grin, "Watch your step," was all she said.

"What!" Harry said confusedly refusing to back away without at least a good kiss.

"Depulso!" Hermione screamed against Harry's lips and Harry went whirling back and fell into the pool.

He flailed about for half a minute, still not understanding what happened when he saw Hermione standing in front of him, wand-drawn and eyes sparkling.

"Maybe next time Potter!" She said seductively and Harry splashed his arms in the water in mock-anger, drenched for the second time in fifteen minutes.

"I'll get you Granger, I will kiss you if it's the last thing I do!" He said with finality as Hermione exited the Room with barely concealed laughter.

Diagon Alley, London

The Leaky Cauldron

11:45 AM

A flash of green flames and Harry Evans-Potter had reached Diagon Alley. As soon as he stepped out of the fireplace (and got up from the ground), he turned to his companions,

"Our objective is simple: we kill Her and permanently harm any enemies in our wake as we move along."

Neville, Draco and Sirius nodded.

Harry turned around and faced Susan Bones and her contingent, "Susan, I want a complete surprise attack from the rear end, they won't know what hit them. When they see us coming: The Boy-Who-Lived and the Blood Traitors, all their attention will be on us, you and your team will have all the distraction you need, clear?"

Susan nodded and turned to her team, "You heard the man! Two straight lines apparating behind Ollivanders, you know the spot, I want spot-on apparation and if I hear even a faint crack, so help you God!"

They disappeared without a sound and Harry turned to the others, "Its time."

"We're with you mate." Neville said encouragingly.

Harry smiled at his friend and turned to the main door of the Leaky Cauldron that led into the now Battle Zone.

A few taps from Draco and the Barrier subsided to open the gateway to the Wizarding Market of England. The sight presented chilled Harry to the bone.

The once multicoloured and blaring advertisements were gone, the beautiful displays in shops and merchants on the roads were pushed to the side and were being protected by Night Foxes. Up ahead in the corner, beside the ruins of Madame Malkin's, were Order Members, Night Foxes and Ministry Aurors fighting with several daunting figures in black robes: Death Eaters.

A flash of red light hit one of the Foxes and she fell, others came to cover her and someone threw a Portkey on the fallen member. As soon as the Fox hit the ground, Harry saw red. Jaw clenched, fists closed, eyes deep with concentration.

"ENOUGH!" He yelled.

There was not a single sonorous charm on him, nothing. The sheer power of his voice and authority in his tone, stopped the battle and everyone turned to look at General Potter.

Harry walked up to the biggest collection of Death Eaters and stood in front of them. He stuck out his hand and invited them forward. The Death Eaters smiled menacingly to each other and came forward, ready to kill.

Harry raised his holly wand and his left hand at the same time, a combination of wand and wandless magic was deadly in combat, as he had come to learn.

The Death Eaters began shooting curses, jinxes and hexes at him left, right and centre. Harry dodged most and erected a powerful reflexive and protective shield and hurled back several of their curses or instead adsorbed the strength of them.

When Harry's shield turned pink, Harry raised his wand hand and free hand to his head and looked on with deep concentration, "Avant Combattons, TUE!"

The pink shield erupted a force of magical energy, all Death Eater energy that rebounded upon the horrid black-clad figures. Out of twenty, five fell and Foxes on the sides, threw Portkeys at them and transported them back for further questioning and justice to be meted out to them by the Exiled Wizengamot at Hogwarts.

The remaining Death Eaters looked to the side to enervate their fallen comrades, only to see they had already been whisked away. Harry smiled at their outrage.

"Surrender now, or face even more retribution!" Harry said in a loud and clear voice.

The Death Eaters looked at him with disbelief mingled with defiance.

One bold one came forward and spat at his face, "In your dreams Potter!"

Harry simply shrugged, "Let it be remembered, that I did try, if nothing else..."

With those words, Harry did a complete 360 degree turn and flailing his wand around him he called, "Nev, Dray, Siri, NOW!"

Neville stuck out his wand and yelled, "Capulsio!"

An icky green light surrounded the Death Eaters as Draco's spell of "Cageux!" trapped them in a golden cage and Sirius' "Petrificus Totalus Maximus!" froze them all.

Harry finished his turn and all of this was done in that time, simultaneously, and screamed, "Accio Bellatrix LeStrange!"

From the frozen bodies, one somewhat feminine body flew upwards and banged into the confines of the golden cage, but could not get through.

Harry looked on in glee, he turned to his friends and Godfather, "We've got her!"

Neville threw a Portkey on her and she was transported back to Hogwarts.

People all around the Alley cheered and the pockets of Death Eaters that were still present apparated or portkeyed away, seeing the bulk of their teams at the mercy of the Boy-Who-Lived.

Harry and Draco high-fived as they looked on at their captives.

They were about to drop the shields and let them out, when the golden cage dropped on its own accord and the body-binding field curse on the fallen Death Eaters came off.

The Death Eaters stood shakily and disappeared. They re-emerged on the far side of the Alley behind the only figure that was not cloaked, their master, who had finally decided to make an appearance.

"Well Potter, I'm impressed." Voldemort said with his wand twirling in his hand. "You have performed admirably. And to think that just a few months ago you could barely protect yourself and watched your friend die in front of you. I must say compared to that, you are presenting a somewhat entertaining challenge."

Harry smirked at Voldemort and did a mock-bow, "It pleases my heart to impress you Voldy."

Voldemort's eyes bugged out and the Death Eaters, Foxes, Order members, civilians, etc. around them gasped, quite audibly.

"You dare insult the Dark Lord?" Came an enraged Death Eater by Voldemort's side.

Harry sighed dramatically, "Really Voldy, you should perhaps get some smarter minions. He's asking me if I dare do something, I obviously just did. Then again, like master like servant: both idiots."

More gasps and shrieks.

"Silence!" Voldemort screeched at everyone listening.

"Arrogance, Potter, will only be your downfall." Voldemort said menacingly as he took a step forward.

Harry smirked again, "Try practicing what you preach."

Voldemort smiled: a creepy, eww-look-at-his-face-its-like-a-snake kind of smile.

"You never cease to entertain me." He said as if giving Harry a great compliment.

Harry raised an eyebrow, "You never cease to bore me. Do you want to fight, or are you here just to talk big and then disappear in a wisp of smoke to leave your minions to die for you?"

"Enough Potter!" Now he was angry, "You die today!" Voldemort said as he lunged forward.

"Bring it on Snake-face!" Harry said as he jumped forward.

People watched as Harry and Voldemort locked themselves in an epic conflict, one that would be remembered down the ages. Everyone just had one hope: that Harry Potter lives up to his title and remains the Boy-Who-Lived.

Location Unknown

Time Unknown

Hermione sat by the lake pulling at the grass, like she did everyday here. She was sure eternity had passed, or perhaps it was still the same day, she wouldn't really know the difference. One minute she was with her Harry, next, she was here, in God-Knows-Where Land.

Hermione huffed as she fell back onto the grass. She was not hungry, she was not thirsty, she was not... anything, just bored, mind-numbingly bored.

Hermione raised herself off the grass and looked to the distance at the shinning lake in front of her. There were tiny sparkles as ripples, but the water was calm, there was no current and even though there was a calm wind blowing, all the time, it made no effect on the water whatsoever.

One thing was for sure, wherever Hermione was, was perfect, just horribly boring at the same time.

"Huh..." Hermione sighed for the millionth and probably more than a millionth time. She closed her eyes and tried imagining that feeling.

She was probably going out of her mind with boredom but no one would really look at her funny. Right now she wouldn't mind any company at all, even if they just wanted to laugh at her. She felt she

could feel Harry, from time to time, touching her, caressing her, and oddly enough brushing her hair too!

Nothing else seemed more absurd, but then again, before she realized magic existed, anything breaking the firm laws of science seemed impossible, before she was shoved into his place, she never thought a calm, peaceful sanctuary as such could have existed and that she would detest such a sanctuary with a passion.

"Anything is possible..." She said to herself like she did every morning before she opened her eyes and started a new day

Hermione hugged her knees closer to her chest as she stared off again, hoping for something, some change, shift, movement, life, anything.

A faint spark of red caught Hermione's attention. She immediately stood up and stared at the distance with peering eyes, hoping against hope that someone had come to save her from this purgatory, or else that her sanity was not leaving her.

The spark intensified and Hermione was sure it was a bright, flowing red spark.

Peculiar, but at this point Hermione could care less if it was a one-footed platypus that spoke elvish came to her, so long as it did.

She walked right up to the lake mouth and waited with bated breath.

The spark grew to a humanoid form that got clearer and clearer, till it was within forty yards of Hermione and she was sure it was a young woman. From a distance, Hermione thought that Ginny had somehow made it to where she was, but on closer inspection, she knew it wasn't Ginny: the form of the person coming was more filled out than Ginny's petite frame and the hair was more of a blood-red siren than Ginny's Weasley-orangish shade.

The 'person' was now but a few feet away and Hermione was shocked by the recognition, but it couldn't be, it was impossible, the only explanation would be that Hermione was... was... NO!

Hermione backed away from the lake mouth and took several tentative steps backwards, it seems the person coming towards her was literally running on water. The irony was not lost on Hermione.

She skidded to a halt when she stepped on land, her flowing red hair splaying in a beautiful fashion in the open wind, she was shaking her hair and smiling brightly as she stared up with her eyes closed, bathing herself in sunlight. She spread her hands to the sides and lifted them up, trying to encompass the sun and take it all in, her smile ever widening.

On the whole, it did look a bit silly and Hermione would have definitely pointed it out had she not been mesmerized by this beautiful woman and who Hermione thought she was.

"Hello..." Hermione said nervously.

The redhead's eyes snapped open and forward and stared at Hermione pensively, her hands falling to her sides and her jaw tightening to a smaller smile.

Hermione jerked backwards involuntarily, the eyes on the woman... they were hauntingly familiar – a piercing shade of green, filled with unbelievable amounts of love, sparkling with intelligence and mischief and staring a hole right through the person they fell on, as if they were seeing that person's soul.

There was no doubting who this woman was; the resemblance was uncanny.

Hermione closed her eyes and took a deep breath to try and keep her voice free of trembling, "Its wonderful to meet you Mrs. Potter, am I dead?"

The supposed Lily Evans-Potter looked at Hermione with an arched eyebrow and then threw her head back and laughed hysterically. It wasn't a dainty, feminine giggle like Hermione assumed her to have, it was a full-blown guffaw and Hermione, despite the gravity of the situation, noticed the intricacies of the situation.

'Lily' shook her head as she tried to calm herself and looked at Hermione with 'her' green eyes and smiled despite 'her' best efforts.

"I am not Lily Evans-Potter-" Said the redhead.

"Oh... I'm sorry, you just looked so much like her and I've been here for so long and then the running on water thing, its just I've been so... I'm sorry I... Its just that I..." Hermione rambled on and on and the whole time the redheaded beauty just looked at her with mirthful green eyes and a smile.

She placed her milky, thin fingers on Hermione's lips to shut her up when the humour in the situation no longer amused her.

"Its alright. Now listen." She quietly commanded and Hermione nodded vigourously, slightly unnerved by the woman, there was something inhuman about her and Hermione knew it.

"Lily Evans-Potter did have this form, I agree. But I am simply choosing a form to appear in front of you that would be, for the lack of a better description, less alarming." Said the woman.

Hermione's eyebrows shot up at that statement, "Then who are you? A Metamorphmagus?"

'Lily' smiled again and shook her head in the negative, "I believe we've met before, I am Goddess Chaos and you are my chosen daughter. A Daughter of Chaos, a Daughter of Destiny and a Daughter of Fate, a true Child of Prophecy."

Hermione stared, then spluttered incoherently, then stared some more.

"So," Chaos said after clapping her hands as if preparing a dish in a kitchen, "I have a lot of information to give but you have a lot of questions and I'm sure the information will come up as we go along. Ask away child!"

Diagon Alley, London

Main Square

01:00 PM

"We have been fighting for more than an hour now Potter, are you... tiring?" Voldemort said with a condescending smile.

"Let me think about that Snake-face," Harry said as he stopped in his position and placed his wand on his chin as if in deep concentration.

Voldemort threw another curse at him but he jumped and apparated to a different spot within the golden cage, their joint wands created, "Not in the slightest."

Voldemort growled and Harry looked at him in surprise, "I would think that it would be below you to growl like a lowly animal or, dare I say it," Harry said in mockery, "a muggle!"

Voldemort screeched and threw another killing curse at Harry, which Harry skilfully avoided by apparating to a different spot.

If it weren't a life or death situation, Harry was actually enjoying this game of cat and mouse, however, Harry knew that Voldemort was thinking of him as a fly, only to be squatted and nothing more, it was only a matter of time before he did. To add insult to injury, Harry was tiring and despite his best efforts he knew Voldemort was not, since Harry was the one jumping and apparating from point to point, Voldemort just stood there hurling curses. Everyone else stood around, Death Eaters on one side of the cage and everyone else on the other.

The match was coming to a close and Harry did not like his chances at this point.

'I need a miracle, or a damn good reason for failing again' Harry thought morbidly as he threw off another curse from Voldy and sending back one of his own, which Voldemort threw off with a lazy wave of his hand.

"Enough Potter, I am growing tired of this silly chase. Surrender now and I will let you live by my side. You have tremendous potential, I'd hate to see it wasted." Voldemort said magnanimously.

Harry chuckled, he needed to keep stalling till he came up with a Plan B because Plan A of jumping into battle and playing on his luck was failing.

"Do you ever get tired of treating yourself like a God? You aren't one you know that?" Harry retorted evenly.

Voldemort's creepy smile transformed into a sneer and his hands, previously open into a warm (however you imagine warm with Voldemort) embrace fell to his sides with a sudden swoop to match his instantaneous change in expression.

"I offer you life and power and you deny it Potter. Let it be remembered, that I tried..." He said mimicking Harry's words from not-so-long ago and the irony of the situation was not lost on Harry.

"This ends now," Voldemort continued as he levelled his wand to Harry and blasted.

From the corner of his eye, Harry saw Susan and her contingent make a final sweep across the Death Eaters who had been completely unsuspecting. Harry had done his job, he had distracted the master while the minions were caught. Voldemort with an army was a formidable foe that could takeover Britain, Voldemort without an army was just plain weird looking and alone though powerful to face nonetheless.

Harry jumped, but he was too slow and his luck had finally run out. The beam hit him in the leg and tore through his ligament.

Ergh! A bone-breaking curse!

Harry fell to the ground in an unceremonious heap, gasping for air as his blood ran out. Somewhere in the distance he could feel Sirius, Neville, Draco and Susan banging on the golden cage, trying to get to him, but it was impenetrable, just like Luna said it would be when she was designing it.

Voldemort chuckled, "Well Potter, only a miracle can give your pathetic excuse of a life an infinitesimal chance of survival. Any last wishes?"

"Since when were you so merciful?" Harry asked, stalling some more, Plan B was nowhere in sight, Harry was actually wondering if his luck was going to quit on him finally.

"Since you survived me so many times, even the Dark Lord can be merciful to a somewhat worthy adversary. You're quite admirable Potter, given the right direction and guidance, you would have made an excellent General, but, certain things just aren't meant to be," Voldemort said casually, shrugging his shoulders in a deliberate fashion, as if they were discussing the weather and not Harry's impending demise, "I won't ask again, any last wishes?"

Harry looked at Voldemort with a smile plastered on his face and if it had not been for the many years Voldemort had seen the unimaginable, he probably would have flinched at this blinding happiness radiating from Harry at this crucial juncture of his long overdue death at Voldemort's hands.

"I don't have a wish, but I do have some advice Voldy..." Harry said innocently.

The name irked Voldemort but no one heard Harry say it and Harry was about to die anyway so Voldemort decided not to take offence, "And that is..."

Harry's smile, if possible, widened, "DUCK!"

With those words, Harry Potter turned over and placed his head on the ground, his hands on his hair, pushing it even further downwards.

Voldemort looked at the lad with a certain amount of annoyance and pinch of pity, 'Lad has gone 'round the twist with terror' he thought dismissively.

"Good bye Potter," he said loudly, "Ava-"

"AAAAAAAAAA!" Came a screech and interrupted Voldemort's death chant for Harry.

Location Unknown

Time Unknown

Hermione sat there looking at Chaos-Lily with utter shock etched across her face.

"-and then you ended up here, a mindscape, or purgatory as you put it." Finished Chaos-Lily with a smile.

Hermione stared for a moment or two longer but then spoke calmly and coherently, very unlike her internal mental voice, "So let me get this straight: that last weekend in Hogsmeade, Harry and I fought against a random Death Eater attack. In the ensuing debacle, Harry and I got separated. He wanted to be with me but I sent him off to Zonko's, to help there, while I helped out at Madame Puddifoot's with Draco and Luna. Ginny, who was one of the evacuated students screamt because the Death Eaters caught a hold on Ronald. I tried to save him from Bellatrix Lestrange who was about to AK him by throwing a transfigured boulder at her. That didn't bode well with her so she fired an unknown curse at me, one that even she was unfamiliar with and because of her fragile mental state after years of Azkaban, she mixed up a slowly killing, organ liquefaction curse with a permanent sleep enchantment. The end result being I ended up in an unknown Magical Coma, like a permanent stasis, only if the stasis is removed my organs liquefy instantly and I die. But because my organs are always on this verge of death, if any physical sustenance is introduced in my system, the process commences anyway, the only thing keeping me alive, is my magic and the magic that others pour into me when my core dies out. I've been in a bed in the Hospital Wing for three months and the war has been in full swing outside. On the day that I fell, so did the Ministry to Voldemort, but we've been maintaining a stronghold at Hogwarts with the Ministry in Exile and Wizengamot, whatever's remained of it. Did I get it all right?"

Chaos-Lily nodded. "Very eloquently and succinctly put, however, I would've used far more expletives when describing that murdering son of a bitch, although that would be insulting myself, but your way is politically correct, yes."

Hermione let that comment go for now and sat down again with the same expression of a cross between shock, horror and complete and utter failure on her face.

"I left Harry to deal with all of that alone? He is fighting a war without me!" Hermione put her head in her hands and cried.

Chaos-Lily patted her shoulder sympathetically. "Well, you have a chance now."

Hermione's head shot up at a speed that even an eternal goddess found disturbing in a mortal.

"How?" Was her quick response.

"Cutting right to the chase I see. Well Hermione, I cut a deal with the Great One and he's allowing you to return provided you fulfil a specific obligation." Now she looked guilty and Hermione caught onto that immediately.

"Why did it take you so long to get a deal? Harry mentioned to me that I am your child. Once I am a Daughter of Chaos, you have ultimate jurisdiction over me, it couldn't have taken so long." Hermione said, her brow furrowing in confusion as Chaos-Lily's guilt seemed to intensify, "Unless our information on spiritual texts on the gods are inaccurate. I mean I did read up on those things way back in third year because it was fascinating to read about the magical perspective on gods and godly intervention but I went really in-depth when Harry told me about being a Daughter of Chaos. Maybe I-"

"Your information is perfect Hermione, no mistakes on your part, just maybe a tiny, minute, almost negligible one on my part." Chaos-Lily admitted.

Hermione turned to face her with her eyebrow quirked, "And this mistake is?"

Chaos-Lily cleared her throat uncomfortably, throwing her red hair behind her neck she spoke, "well, have you by any chance researched what a Child of Prophecy is?"

Hermione looked at her with wide eyes and nodded slowly, as if treading foreign territory, "When Harry told me about the prophecy involving him, I looked it up, a Child of Prophecy is a human chosen by all three sisters to represent a change in humanity. This human must be a Child of Destiny, Fate and Chaos; as is Harry."

Chaos-Lily nodded, "Precisely, now, do you know what a Child of Prophecy is more commonly referred to as, in human folklore at least?"

Hermione closed her eyes and thought, she came up with nothing and opened her eyes to look at Chaos-Lily sceptically, "I'm sorry, I'm not really sure what you're talking about."

Chaos-Lily nodded with a small smile, "You're thinking like a witch honey, think like a muggle to answer this."

Hermione looked on sceptically till it struck her, "In Greek mythology, the ones to always receive prophecies to save humanity and the gods were called Heroes."

"Any similarities between Harry and such fabled Heroes?" Chaos-Lily egged on without looking at Hermione.

"They're half-bloods," Hermione gasped, "Like Harry, half-muggle-born, half-pureblood."

Chaos-Lily fixed her with a sharp gaze but didn't stop her.

"But what has this got to do with me?" Hermione asked questioningly, not seeing the connection but enjoying the interesting discussion nonetheless.

"Hermione, in the original timeline, this had nothing to do with you. You see, for a Hero to fulfil his destiny and meet his fate and cause the chaos due to him, he must endure great tragedy. In the original timeline, Harry had a large number of tragedies because he needed them: to face Quirrelmort, the Basilisk, the Department of Mysteries fiasco, the Cave incident, which happened in his then sixth year and finally the ultimate defeat of Voldemort. Although Harry didn't know it, there were individual prophecies of all these incidents made at different eras in time. To fulfil each and every one of these prophecies and survive, Harry had to undergo great tragedy. Growing up as an orphan gave him the strength to kill Quirrelmort, abuse at the hands of his relatives conquered the Basilisk, the death of Sirius Black ensured his continued survival in the Department of Mysteries, the death of Dumbledore allowed him to survive his sixth year battle and finally, the impossibility of him obtaining his true love, you, and losing himself and his life to the Weasley Clan, gave him the tragedy to be able to kill Voldemort." She sighed sadly, "it is a great burden to be a Child of Prophecy".

Hermione looked on indignantly, "That is just horrible! Terrible! How could you- Wait! That still doesn't explain what this has to do with me?"

Chaos-Lily looked at her sadly with the telltale guilt, "You were Harry's final tragedy, you were Destined to be his true love and best friend and Fated to forever be unrequited. By making you a Daughter of Chaos, all of that changed. There was a side-effect to this change, however."

Hermione's mind worked furiously and if Harry would have seen her, he would have been able to see the calculations and reasoning running a mile an hour in her head.

"I became a Child of Prophecy, by accident, on your part. I was already a Daughter of Destiny and Fate with my involvement with Harry, but You made me Your Daughter and now I am a Prophecy focus and a reaper of change. Am I right?" Hermione hoped against hope that for once in her life, she wouldn't be right.

Chaos-Lily looked at her expression and knew that her daughter wanted to be proved wrong on this one occasion, but unfortunately, "You are right child."

Hermione turned away with shocked eyes and stared at the fake sea her mind created for herself.

"Tell me my prophecy." She said after a while.

Chaos-Lily looked at her with surprise and pity.

"Are you sure child?"

Hermione nodded, knowing that if she spoke her voice would crack.

"I will suggest this, because you are the daughter of three goddesses, you will receive three prophecies as you have only one main objective as a Child of Prophecy. Each goddess will pass you a prophecy but only Destiny's prophecy will reach you without any trouble. That is the easiest prophecy to obtain as it is literally hurled at you to signal the beginning of developments to fulfil the prophecy. Although Fate and I make prophecies our children rarely ever reach them, as they no longer look beyond the one given to them.

Knowing the additional prophecies may make them seem less vague and perhaps help you in making a better decision."

Hermione nodded once more, bracing herself for a future she never asked for.

Chaos-Lily straightened up and intoned in a deep voice,

"With a mind of steel,

A will of the same,

A changed Daughter of Prophecy,

And Son with fame;

The third Child's ascent,

Lies in the chalice,

The choice is the Daughter's,

The Son's Power on the balance."

Hermione continued staring ahead, "Does that mean what I think it means?"

"It could mean a lot of things." Chaos-Lily answered equally cryptically.

"I hate prophecies." Hermione intoned.

"Me too..." Was the response given.

"Divination is a woolly art!" Hermione said with a passion.

"I agree!" Came the determined response.

Hermione snapped her head at Chaos-Lily, "You created the art!"

Chaos-Lily snapped her head at Hermione, "And can you imagine any being more unpredictable and woollier than myself?"

"Probably not..." Hermione answered sullenly.

"I agree." Chaos-Lily answered with a smirk.

The two women stared at each other for a long while and then they burst out laughing.

When they calmed down, Hermione looked at her uncertainly, "When can I leave?"

"Your exit is fast approaching, faster than you think." Chaos-Lily said conspiratorially.

Immediately a black portal appeared in front of Hermione. Hermione arched an eyebrow and looked at Chaos-Lily questioningly.

Chaos-Lily shrugged, "I'm all about fast-speed results, my sisters are the ones who like to drag things out. It drives me nuts!"

Hermione smiled and patted Chaos-Lily on the back before walking to the portal, but before she left Chaos-Lily sent a final message, "Head to Diagon Alley, Harry and Voldemort are locked in a struggle and Harry's losing. Now I never condone favouritism between my children, but I do have a special place for that lad, so go save him Daughter. Men cannot survive without us women to get them on track."

Hermione smiled and nodded, "Can goddesses ever take a human form and live a life on Earth as humans?" She asked suddenly as an afterthought.

Chaos-Lily looked at her sceptically, "Maybe, maybe not. Human life is a fragile thing, what makes it fragile is its imperfection. We gods and goddesses also share imperfections, but ours are different. We are devoid of long-lasting negativity. However the definition of 'long-lasting' is up for debate as my sisters and I have proven." She said with a smirk, "Then again, what really sets us apart is our unbelievable power, a human form would be simply unable to control it beyond a certain age. As the human body withers, it becomes increasingly incapable to handle a goddess' power."

"So would you say a goddess-human embodiment would die around the end of their physical maturity, say around the age of twenty-two-twenty-three. Yes?" Hermione said with an impish smile.

Goddess Chaos fixed a neutral stare at Hermione, "yes... approximately."

"Correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't that when Lily Evans-Potter died?" Hermione asked cheekily.

Chaos-Lily sighed, "You are the smartest witch of their generation Hermione." Piercing green eyes met brown as Chaos?Lily? continued, "Lily Evans-Potter was my human form. I had no memories of my Goddess status of course, but my abilities were grown into me, I was given a destiny and fate that was painful by my sisters' standards as they meted out revenge on me and being Chaos, I had a prophecy as well. But my sisters' took it one step too far, they preyed on my mortal child and that was something I could not stand for." She said fiercely.

"Harry is half-god?" Hermione said with awe.

Chaos shook her head, "No Hermione, when we gods and goddesses mingle with mortals are children are but mortal, exceptionally gifted and always in trouble and genuine Heroes, but mortal nonetheless. The half-god Greek rubbish is mainly from fables of their exaggerated encounters from the past."

Hermione nodded in understanding then smiled slyly, "So I was right, technically, you are Mrs. Potter!"

Chaos-Lily smiled and nodded, "Your logic is yet to be proven incorrect Daughter, now go save my Son of mortality, magic and heritage."

Hermione walked through the portal, the mindscape disappeared and everything went blank.

Late Lily Evans-Potter and eternally Goddess Chaos stared into the distance, she raised herself and brushed her robes clean before turning and facing the water,

"Walking on water, pfffft!" she said haughtily, "The entire thing is really overrated. I always knew doing that trick on Earth would be a big mistake, they remember it even centuries later. Humans..." She sighed before leaving Hermione's 'purgatory' with a graceful twirl.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Hospital Wing

12.30 PM

Hermione Granger's body began to stir and shake as she slowly became aware of the outside world. She steadily opened her eyes to see her room completely empty. She took in her surroundings and was surprised by all the details. Everything was perfect! And she knew who needed to be thanked for that.

HARRY!

She jumped out of bed and fell flat on the floor.

"Ugh! Well three months of inactivity and zero sustenance had to have taken its toll." Hermione said to no one in particular. "I could really use some help Chaos!"

A sudden flash and an image popped in Hermione's mind, she was trapped below and someone said something to her as plants captured her, "Are you a witch or not?"

Duh! 'I can be really thick sometimes', Hermione thought to herself.

She managed to lift her head up and saw her wand on her bedside table. With a Herculean effort, she managed to pull it down to herself and then rested her unyielding body for a few seconds. When she felt she was ready, she made as strong a grip on her wand as she possibly could and hoped that the spell would take effect without wand waving of any sort.

"M'energize plus que maintenant, après payer!"

A light of pure, blinding sea blue came out from her wand and formed bands around her till she was encapsulated in a cocoon. The light moved inwards and Hermione held her breath. Before she

knew it, she could feel the energy and effectiveness return to her hands and limbs that were hyper-responsive right about then.

She experimentally raised her wand hand and when it moved perfectly, she hoisted herself from the ground and transfigured her hospital gown into something more appropriate for battle.

Seeing it all properly and efficiently, she burst through from the Hospital Wing, surprised to find the school so empty. But that was not her worry right then, she needed to get to Diagon Alley.

"Accio Harry's Firebolt!"

She hoped against hope that the summoning spell would work and long behold, she found the broom standing in front of her without further delay. She grasped the handle and made a run for it, running her options through her mind as she ran.

She could fly to London, but she would never get there in time, the distance was too far, she could apparate there, but she had never apparated before even though she knew the theory and did not fancy splinching herself at such a crucial time. That left flooing. She was on the courtroom floor near the Gryffindor Square, McGonagall's classroom was but a little distance away.

Her decision was made.

She ran to McGonagall's room and banged on the door relentlessly, no response.

'Of course, she's probably on some business with the Order or something, its wartime after all'. Hermione was about to turn around and think of some other floo network, even the Headmaster's if the need came to it, when the door creaked open and Professor McGonagall stood there in all her towering glory and regarded her sternly.

The minute Minerva's eyes fell on her rude interrupter, her expression changed instantly from stern to shock to glee, "H-Hermione? Hermione Granger?"

Hermione smiled at her favourite Professor and hugged her, she had missed the old cat. Minerva was slightly taken aback by this

open gesture but accepted it nonetheless. She didn't even realize when the tears began to fall from her eyes.

"I need to use your floo Professor, I need to get to Diagon Alley!" Hermione said urgently.

"Ms. Granger you need to be in bed, you've just recovered from three months of no sustenance, your magical core died out weeks ago, if not for Mr. Evans-Potter's constant reimbursements to your magic you would have long been dead." McGonagall scolded.

Hermione nearly teared, her Harry was weakening himself every single day and was now locked in a battle with Voldemort without even being at full strength, because he would never fail her.

Hermione sniffed and looked at McGonagall with the sternness of a lioness protecting her mate, "Minerva, you will do your duty and let me to my Harry!"

Minerva was taken aback by the usage of her first name, the blatant disregard of rules of etiquette, and most of all, this coming from her most well behaved and model Gryffindor. This was serious if Hermione was willing to risk her perfect reputation for it.

Minerva nodded and let her in her classroom.

Hermione walked in and gawked at the multitude of pairs of eyes locked on her. She had inadvertently let herself into a second or third year Transfiguration class.

Whispers immediately broke out as McGonagall led her to the fireplace and as Minerva searched for and finally handed her the floo powder, Hermione began to truly comprehend why Harry hated his attention so much, it was odd and unnerving.

"Diagon Alley!"

Hermione screamed and jumped into the blazing flames. She almost missed McGonagall's scream following her travel commencement, "Good luck and kick some Death Eater arse!"

It was a day of changes.

Diagon Alley

The Leaky Cauldron

12:45 PM

Hermione came whizzing out of the fireplace and into the waiting arms of the Aurors there. As soon as she was caught, they drew their wands on her and stared at her questioningly.

"Get off me asshole, I need to get to Harry!" She yelled pointlessly as the gruff who had her by the sleeve, refused to leave her and had taken Harry's Firebolt.

"Don' fink so Missy!" He said as he struggled to keep a hold on her.

"What's all this noise?" Came a booming voice from behind as Madame Bones emerged. As soon as she saw Hermione, her eyes bugged out in disbelief.

"Hermione Granger?"

Saying her name was like a trigger as more whispers broke out and people struggled to get a look at her. The guard holding on to her let go in shock and used his hands to cover his mouth.

Hermione ran forward to Bones but was met with the Madame's wandpoint, "Name all the people present at your induction."

Hermione huffed in annoyance but couldn't avoid protocol; after all, she was the one constantly pushing for protocol to be followed more efficiently, "Ragnok, Griphook, Tatalu, Parthesage, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, Dora Tonks-Black, Harry Potter and yourself, Madame Amelia Bones."

Amelia lowered her wand in disbelief, "Hermione?"

Now Hermione was really getting tired of this.

"Yes I'm back form the dead, or near-dead, whatever! I need to get to Harry, where is he?" Hermione went on despite Amelia's shock.

"He's in the Alley Square, facing off Voldemort, no one can get through the cage, its impenetrable, Luna designed its specifics herself, but Harry wasn't supposed to use it till his final conflict with Voldemort when he was ready and, he is not ready right now. Of course no one expected Voldemort to just show up." Said a quiet Auror from the back who was part of the large fray.

Hermione nodded, that was all the information she needed.

She ran through the tavern and no one got in her way, she was subjected to a lot of staring though. As soon as she was out she looked at the broom in her hands with a slight tremble, she had to get over her fear of flying for Harry. It was now or never!

She mounted the broom determinedly and kicked off. The sensation of flying was odd and nerve racking, Hermione kept chanting to herself not to look down, yet if she didn't, she would never know when to stop to get to Harry.

With more effort than she had ever exerted before, Hermione looked down and saw her Harry. The moment of elation barely lasted as she saw his leg get literally blown off by Voldemort. That made her see red and all rational thought evaporated from her mind and she descended to the cage at a mad rush.

When she reached the cage boundaries, Harry's eyes locked with hers and he broke into a mad grin, he began taunting Voldemort and if the situation hadn't been so dire, she would've chided him.

"Move in the name of the Daughters of Prophecy!" Hermione said ominously to the cage for she recognized it for what it was, a Prophetic Enchantment to keep the Chosen Ones' battle between them and not involve the unsuspecting onlookers.

She flew downwards and Voldemort's head was in plain sight, she withdrew her wand and screamed, "Reducto!"

Voldemort's head burst open and the body of Lord Voldemort fell to the ground. A smoky figure rose and glared at her from its barely visible eyes angrily before dissipating in the air.

Harry looked at it in confusion, but smiled genially when he saw his Hermione land on his broomstick in front of him.

She was looking pristine and perfect. Her curls flying in the fast wind, bushier than ever by her recent flight. Her odd battle-gear, sticking to her like a second skin, emphasizing her perfect curves. Finally, her bright hazel eyes, once again alight with curiosity and knowledge. Oh how he missed his Hermione.

She fell to the ground in front of him and looked at him with the same dreamy expression in her eyes. She pointed her wand at him and without saying a word healed his broken leg. He moved it around experimentally, it wasn't better, but it didn't feel like it needed to be cut off anymore.

"Hi." She said shyly.

"Hi." Was Harry's response.

The golden cage was falling slowly and everyone's cheers around them echoed loudly and proudly.

Voldemort was dead! For now...

"Harry we need to talk..." Hermione said shuddering over the large crowd trying their level best to converge upon them as they impatiently waited for the shield to disappear.

"Remember I wanted to tell you something when we got back from Hogsmeade 'Mione?" Harry said as he fumbled with something in some pocket of his.

Hermione nodded, but in all truth she had completely forgotten about that little titbit, what with being in a coma for three months and all.

Harry pulled out a little box and then raised his hands as the cage fell to stop everyone. People stopped but continued to cheer.

Harry waved his arm on his throat and spoke to the audience at large with a sonorous, "If you would all be quiet for just a second, I need to ask our new saviour an important question."

People quietened a little and then completely, looking at the two expectantly.

Harry helped Hermione to her feet and holding her hands spoke to her, "Hermione you saved me and us all from Voldemort today. You have given me a reason to continue living through this war, you are my reason for even trying to breathe, I would be nowhere without you. All these days in your absence, each passing moment has been an endless eternity of moonless nights, you being here, with me," he stopped as his voice cracked and tears fell from his eyes, "its rekindled the twilight of my existence."

Hermione choked up, could he be...? No... He wouldn't! Would he?

"I love you Hermione Granger, more than my life, more than the world, more than anything or anyone, you are the only one for me and always will be," he let go of her hands and got down on one knee.

'Oh! My! God!' Was the only severely over-punctuated phrase being repeated over and over again in Hermione's mind.

"Marry me..." He said simply with a beautiful diamond and platinum ring sitting in the middle of the little box he had extracted from his pocket not so long ago.

"Say yes!"

"Oh God say yes!"

"Wasn't she in a coma?"

"The two saviours marrying, Perfect!"

"They're such a sweet couple!"

"Please say yes, or I will kill you!"

The murmurs continued as people waited with baited breath, every fibre and nerve in Hermione's body wanted her to just say YES!

A second passed and nothing escaped her lips

"Marry me Hermione Granger!" Harry said loudly and raised his hands wanting the crowd to react with him and they did.

"Say YES!" Came a scream from somewhere nearby.

"Yes!" One cried.

"Yes!" Two cried.

"Yes!" Three cried.

"Yes!" They chanted.

Harry looked at Hermione and her happy yet sad expression.

"Harry..." She started.

"Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes..."

The noise grew and Hermione looked on nervously.

"Listen to me Harry..."

"Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes..." They got louder.

"HARRY!" She was getting annoyed now.

Harry raised his arms for silence.

An excited hush fell over everyone and people waited as Harry looked at Hermione one last time and said those words for her again, his heart beating wildly and praying for an acceptance, "Be mine Hermione Granger, marry me..."

Hermione looked at him, she looked at Sirius and Draco and Neville and Susan, all nodding vigourously, telling her to accept.

Every person in the crowd had the same expression on their faces.

Hermione looked at Harry, right into his piercing green eyes, taking a deep breath, she answered.

"No."

TBC.

Let the flames begin...

The only reason I had her say 'NO' was because I recently got rejected from Oxford University and the rejection for Harry was a bitter medicine. He's going to learn a lot from this as I have. COming so close to getting it all that he can literally taste and then having it rudely taken away from him.

Let the next one come up, a lot more will be explained.

13,000 words guys, this was a two chapter compilation and I wanted to get this story into the into-war mode from war-preparation. I hope the jump wasn't too drastic and I know it started off confusing but I'm hoping you pulled through it and it made sense, somewhat at least.

Love you loads,

Kisses,

~ Gatonio.

Chapter 13

The Sun Sets and Rises Again

People looked at Hermione funnily, as if she were off her rocker or something. A low rumble of whispers broke out in the crowd as her answer was finally comprehended and no further answers or explanations were given to indicate she was changing the meaning of what she had just said.

Harry looked at her with confusion and Hermione looked back with no small amount of guilt, remorse and, dare Harry admit it, determination. If Harry knew his Hermione, and she was the one person he prided him on knowing, when she was determined, moving Olympus would seem an easier task than changing her mind.

But the question was, why?

Sirius looked at the girl he had come to adore as his as his goddaughter-in-law, the lass who had won over his godson's heart and kept under heavy lock-and-key since her illness. Her presence here, today, had only reconfirmed his firm faith in her as being perfect for his cub, but right now he had no effing idea what the bloody hell she was playing at?

But he knew one thing, if things weren't controlled right now, they could get awfully bad.

He did the first thing that came to his mind to diffuse the potentially detrimental situation: he laughed, a loud, guffawing, bellowing laugh.

People around stopped whispering and looked at him oddly, as if he'd finally cracked.

"That Hermione, always a hoot! But really Hermione, jokes apart, that was a bad place for a prank, but a good prank nonetheless," he continued laughing and people around soon caught on.

It wasn't a perfect cover, Merlin knows it lacked any form of finesse but it was a cover nonetheless. Draco, Neville and Susan looked at Sirius uneasily, them knowing Hermione well, made them realize that she was pretty serious about her answer. Sirius' eyebrows shot

up when he locked with their eyes and as if in silent conversation he conveyed to them the precariousness of their situation.

Susan was the first to catch on and she laughed loudly, diffusing the atmosphere even more. She caught onto Hermione's shoulders and as Hermione moved to try and tell these people that she was very serious about her answer, Susan's grip on her shoulder turned vice. She whispered urgently in Hermione's ear,

"This is a delicate situation Hermione, now is not the time."

Realization dawned on Hermione's face and Hermione realized that in her sadness, confusion, elation and adrenaline-rush, she hadn't even stopped to consider the various ramifications of her actions.

She turned to Harry with terror on her face, which she smoothly masked and laughed half-heartedly, "Come Harry, you can take a joke can't you?"

Harry's world had collapsed around him. Every pillar set in stone in his virtual land of happiness was based off of Hermione and her one syllable answer had caused it all to crash around him. He just couldn't understand her reasons, why would she do something like this? But now was not the time, he had to pretend for the crowd, and deal with the situation in private.

Since he was pretending...

Harry laughed loudly and before Hermione could respond, he caught her hand, and slipped his ring onto her finger. Hermione gasped, then glared at Harry, then her expression softened and turned to that same guilty one, but Harry would deal with all of that later. He raised Hermione's hand to the crowd and people cheered and clapped. In the minds of the world, everything was fine and dandy, just waiting for the golden couple to be married and Voldemort was dead. What could possibly go wrong?

Though none of them ever realized it, they all thought about the upcoming problems simultaneously as the weight of their oncoming actions ran through their minds.

'What am I going to do about Blaise?' Was Susan's worry.

'Daphne is going to kill me when she finds out about Hermione...' Was Neville's thought.

'I hope Luna can keep the situation under control.' Draco thought dryly.

'My cub is going to die if things don't blow over well...' Was Sirius' fear.

'Why does Hermione not love me anymore?' Harry's desperate plea.

'DAMN YOU TO HELL CHAOS AND MAY YOU ROT THERE FOREVER!' Were Hermione's outrageous, mutinous views.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Great Hall

02:00 PM

It was a silent team of victors that returned to the Hogwarts after the face-off with the Death Eaters. There were a lot of questions on people's minds, but no one had the gall to ask them in such a situation.

Susan apparated into Great Hall with her Auror contingent, giving them some orders, she dispatched the happy party-goers and turned her attention to the fireplaces. One by one, they all returned to school: Harry followed by Sirius, Neville, Draco, Amelia and Hermione.

As soon as Hermione stepped out, there was a huge applause from everyone present there. Hermione looked at the applauding crowd in surprise and blush crept on her face, as she hid herself from their view and just bowed lightly in embarrassment.

'This is going to be a long meeting...' Susan thought miserably.

"Welcome back warriors! We have all heard the good news, perhaps if we glean the exact details from you it would be better." Dumbledore said jovially, sitting far to the side, with his left arm in a cast and eyes ever-twinkling.

"Professor Dumbledore?" Hermione said in worry.

"It's wonderful to see you again Ms. Granger, amongst the consciously living as it is. We've missed you dearly. But I daresay your return to us was extremely well-timed." Dumbledore said with a large smile.

The main doors burst open and in walked their commander, the new Leader-of-the-Light, the one chosen by Fawkes to Head the Order of the Phoenix, the youngest General in a millennium: Luna Lovegood.

A loud, musical trill was heard in the background as with a flashy flame Fawkes appeared in the room and flew downwards to Luna, to be perched on her shoulder. Luna smiled at Fawkes genially and stroked his head lovingly. She then turned to Hermione and hugged her, strongly and possessively.

She pulled back to register the shocked look on Hermione's face and laughed, "Yes Hermione, we have a lot of explaining to do, you have a lot to catch up on. But before all of that, it's great to have you back."

Hermione nodded weakly and Susan had to physically prevent herself from rolling her eyes in irritation, 'can't we just skip the pleasantries and get on with business,' Susan thought despairingly.

Luna turned around and faced everyone in the Assembly, "Order Members, we have a lot to catch up on with our newly returned friend and Fawkes here has just inducted her into the Order. I request you all, except Inner Circle Members, to kindly retire from this Hall until further notice. Thank you."

In short order, Susan noticed half of the room empty within seconds. It never ceased to surprise Susan how much authority Luna managed to withhold despite being the youngest in the group. Nevertheless, she was always a marvellous and brilliant witch.

Dumbledore flicked his wand and the main room vanished to reveal a simple setting with only a few chairs around a large, round table that they used for such meetings.

People took their seats and faced each other. There was an awkward silence in the air, but as usual Luna seemed unperturbed by it.

A minute passed and no one said a word, seeing the intense atmosphere Luna clapped her hands loudly, "I declare this meeting for the Inner Circle of the Order of the Phoenix started."

Everyone snapped out of their trances and looked at Luna oddly, while she continued to smile genially.

"Hermione, we are glad to have you back with us. I believe we have a lot of recapping to do for you, yes?" Luna asked kindly.

Hermione looked around at the occupants of the room, people whom she considered friends and more, but so much time had passed, she just felt... lost.

"Where would you like to begin?" Luna asked kindly.

'Well here goes nothing...' Hermione thought sarcastically to herself, "What happened after I was... subdued?" She used a lesser word seeing the telltale flinch in Harry's eyes when she mentioned it.

Luna smiled sadly but continued, "The Battle of Hogsmeade was the first strike of the Second War, as it is come to be known. However, as we analyzed the battle and the resultant attack on the Ministry, we came to realize that the attack on Hogsmeade village was a simple diversion. I believe Member Fox Bones can give you a thorough explanation about that."

Hermione turned to look at Amelia but Amelia simply smiled and shook her head with her eyes shining behind her monocle, with what Hermione assumed to be... pride?

A little amount of throat clearing and Hermione focused her attention to the other Bones.

"Susan?" Hermione said incredulously.

Susan smiled and enjoyed her moment, "A lot of time has passed since our battle simulations in the DA Hermione," her smile vanished and she turned business-like, "As Luna mentioned, the Battle of

Hogsmeade was a diversion to the speediest takeover of the Ministry in Magical War History. It was quick, decisive and absolute; a rather impressive feat. Hogsmeade took three casualties in total, none fatal, except..."

Hermione's eyes widened at the mention of a fatal casualty.

"NONE were fatal Susan." Harry growled from the side of the table and Susan took a deep breath to calm herself.

Realization dawned on Hermione about whom they considered the fatal casualty.

Susan opened her eyes and continued as if uninterrupted, "As Harry quite clearly pointed out, none were fatal, three casualties in all: Madame Rosmerta, Colin Creevey and... yourself," she whispered the last word then looked up again, all business, "however, all casualties have made complete recoveries from injuries, some speedy, while others took longer. The Ministry attack was not as comforting for us. They took down seventeen Ministry employees, whose mangled remains were portkeyed a little outside Hogsmeade and left for us. Some prominent names among those deceased were Rufus Scrimgeour, Head of Auror Office, Cornelius Fudge, late Minister of Magic and Emmeline Vance, Senior Auror and Order Member."

Susan stopped and looked back to Luna who took up the conversation without missing a beat, "It was an ominous beginning. We had taken heavy hits, we were lucky that Madame Bones had survived the attacks and made her way to Hogwarts, not as healthily as we would like but relatively unscathed comparatively. Once Death Eaters gained control of the various Ministerial outposts and offices that came with the main building, they went about attacking, through easily available information, any and all present and future muggleborn witches and wizards as well as their families. It was brutal, but not as despairing. I believe Member Fox D will provide those details." Here she turned to face someone else who surprised Hermione, D stood for Draco, of course...

Draco nodded and continued, "The Night Foxes have had more victories than losses, though by a cutting number. In the past three months, eighty-five muggleborn and one-hundred-and-sixty-seven light-affiliated half-blood and pureblood witches and wizards and

their families have been targeted. Making a total of two-hundred-and-fifty-two families, nearly a quarter of which have no idea about magic and its effects on their families' unknown witches and wizards; roughly fifteen-hundred individuals overall. We have managed to save and relocate exactly one-hundred-and-twenty-two targeted families. Many have left for the continent or have moved to Ireland for the time being, till the threat ends or spills over forcing them to move again. Exactly thirty-seven soon to be thirty-eight families reside here, within the castle, or in the village as of now. The remaining proved to be... unreachable."

Hermione's eyes bugged out at those numbers, they were astronomical!

Luna took up the main focus of the conversation and continued, "Yet despite these visibly successful numbers, hope in the Light has been diminishing. Our Savior..." everyone looked around nervously not willing to admit it, "...has been recovering from a bit of personal trauma. His... inactivity... for some time proved hindering to the furthering of the cause of the Light."

"Yet here we stand today," Dumbledore said cheerily, "Voldemort is gone for the time being and we have time to finish the remaining horcruxes."

Hermione looked at Dumbledore confusedly, "I have a few more questions," Luna indicated her to go on, "how did Luna become the Leader-of-the-Light? How did fifteen and fourteen year-old wizards and witches come to hold such important positions in the war?"

Luna smiled, "For your second question, soon after your... incapacitation... a group of the students, DA Advanced Level students to be specific were invited into a Time Compression Chamber kept hidden here at Hogwarts for times of war needing new warriors. We've all spent five days within the Chamber and gained the experience of five years of training. This is about a month after the War broke out and we were lacking arsenal and manpower. Professor Flitwick was the one who suggested the Chamber, it was debated heatedly, finally, Harry managed to convince the Wizengamot-in-Exile to rule in favour of the Chamber, as this is war. As a result, Harry, Draco, Neville, Susan, myself, Blaise, Daphne, Padma, Cho, Seamus, Dean, Terry, Michael, Justin, Ian, Fred and George were inside the Chamber, training with various instructors

and teachers who accompanied us. We've all risen in our ranks since then. As per your first question, when we returned, the Order of the Phoenix was reconvened to induct all the new members. At every formal induction ceremony, a new Leader-of-the-Light is chosen by the Phoenix, Fawkes in our case. To be honest, we expected Harry to be picked and Fawkes was perched on his shoulder for an inordinate amount of time during the ceremony, but ultimately, the Phoenix-Flame made its way to me."

Harry chuckled, "Luna, trust you to grossly underestimate yourself. Fawkes chose you from first sight, we all saw it. We were surprised, but not shocked, in retrospect, we all agree the choice was impeccable."

Luna bowed her head in acknowledgement of the compliment.

"Any other questions Hermione?" Luna asked eyeing the recently awoken girl warily.

"Where's Blaise? Everyone else from the original DA Advanced Team is here." Hermione asked confusedly.

Everybody froze and Susan looked like she had eaten something foul. Every threw Susan nervous glances, Hermione immediately sensed the tense atmosphere.

"Did I ask something wrong?" She asked worriedly.

"Well Hermione, you see—" Luna started but was cut off by Susan.

"He betrayed us Hermione," she said bluntly and Hermione's eyes bugged out in shock, "he tried to kill me, he succeeded in killing one other student and ran back to his Master."

Hermione shook her head in disbelief, "I cannot believe it," she said softly to herself, she looked at Susan with sad eyes, "I'm sorry Susan."

"You have nothing to apologize for, you weren't here when it happened." Susan answered stiffly.

"Anything else Hermione?" Luna asked kindly.

"I'll ask as they pop up." Hermione conceded having her mind working overdrive already to catch up with all the information being hurled at her presently.

Luna nodded and addressed the committee as a whole, "Let's review the Prophecy analysis up until now. Daphne...?"

Cool blonde hair swirled beautifully as Neville gazed at Daphne with a smitten expression, "The prophecy that started it all has been comprehended to a great extent: Harry has to destroy the horcruxes before facing Voldemort, we are in the process of doing that."

Luna nodded, "Progress." She said simply.

Daphne withdrew some parchment from a folder as read it out, "The Horcrux-Diary of Tom Marvolo Riddle was destroyed in April 1992 by one Harry James Potter in the Chamber of Secrets within Hogwarts. The Horcrux-Chalice of Helga Hufflepuff was destroyed in August 1995 by Goblin Master Ragnok at Gringotts, kept in secret in the Lestrangle Vault. The Horcrux-Diadem of Rowena Ravenclaw was destroyed in December 1995 by one Luna Lovegood within the Room of Requirement within Hogwarts. The Horcrux-Ring of Salazar Slytherin was destroyed in January 1996 by one Albus Dumbledore in the Gaunt Ancestral Home in Little Hangleton. The Horcrux-Locket of Salazar Slytherin was destroyed in January 1996 by one Sirius Black in Number 12 Grimmauld Place in London. The Horcrux placed within Nagini still exists as the snake is yet to be killed completely. The Horcrux within Harry still exists, we have no fathomable ways as of now to rid him of it. The last Horcrux is the only remaining piece of Voldemort's soul that exists within his 'body'." With that succinct explanation Daphne sat down and faced the crowd with a cool gaze.

Hermione smiled at the great progress made and was worried at the same time about Harry. How would they get rid of that last one in him?

"Now," Luna continued, "prophecy analysis, we are going to deconstruct the prophecy Harry made in August of the previous year in real time. Madame Bones, if you would please..." Luna gestured politely.

Madame Bones stood and recited the first bit of the prophecy,

"Wrongs shall be righted Light Lord,

The Fallen shall be avenged,

This part is easy enough to deconstruct," Madame Bones deduced, "Light Lord', in this particular case was Professor Dumbledore, to whom this prophecy was addressed. 'wrongs shall be righted, fallen shall be avenged' is a continuous thought. We are about to right the wrongs for the Wizengamot-in-Exile is in the process of punishing every one of the Death-Eaters caught today. Those who have 'fallen' at the hands of these 'wrong-doers' will receive the vengeance due to them.

A no-name will rule by the Chosen's side,

This part, though initially senseless, makes sense in the light of new developments over the past few months. The 'no-name' we assume is Mr...um...Draco, as he forfeited any last name in favour of just a first and he shall 'rule by the chosen's side'. The 'Chosen' here could be Harry, as the Chosen One of the prophecy to defeat Voldemort, or it could be Luna, who is the Chosen Flame-holder of the Order of the Phoenix. What exactly will either pair 'rule' over, is up for interpretation.

Lies will be undone,

The beacon of truth will blow.

Again a continuous thought, synonymous with the idea that truth will come out as it did. People are now aware that Voldemort was... is a half-blood. He lost considerable following at that truth being revealed. Moreover, the working of The Howler as the true Wizarding newspaper, independent of the Ministry and its influence, is what truly allowed 'the beacon of truth to blow'.

At the meeting of Lion and Eagle,

The Serpent shall yield,

The Badger will break free,

Saving the viewer of history.

Here we have some confusing ideas. Albus spoke to the Sorting Hat and asked him his opinion of which students best represent their Houses. Gryffindor was by Mr. Evans-Potter, Ravenclaw by Ms. Lovegood, Hufflepuff by my niece, Susan, and Slytherin by none other than Blaise Zabini. Now we believe this part has also been fulfilled for when Harry and Luna met during the Phoenix-Flame ceremony, they revealed Blaise to be a Death Eater when Fawkes rejected him, causing him to yield and Susan to break free of him. This, in turn, foiled Zabini's plan to kill Albus, thus, saving the 'viewer of history'.

The Dark Lord will face retribution,

The Chosen One will rise,

The Mooner and Grim will eat the rat,

The shapeshifter shall reveal the wrongdoers,

The Manipulator will fall, Light Lord,

Wrongs shall be righted Light Lord,

The Fallen shall be avenged...

The rest is yet to take place for we see no foreseeable actions in the present to prove the passage of these events."

With that Madame Bones sat down amidst a polite applause. Hermione for her part was very greatly shocked by the number of events that had passed in her absence. Its like she fell asleep one night in her bed and woke up in a different world altogether. The people are the same and so are the situations, just completely different simultaneously.

Luna smiled at Amelia and nodded.

"Right now our aim is to infiltrate Riddle Manor and destroy Nagini as well as round up the remaining Death Eaters. Neville, Susan and Draco, please work with Tonks and Remus to get the units ready for these attacks. Now is our time to strike. Hermione," she turned to the bushy-haired girl, "Professor Dumbledore, yourself and I will be

in the Time Compression Chamber, we need to get you up-to-date with everyone else."

Hermione just nodded with a weak smile.

"That's all for now. Thank you members."

Slowly members rose from their seats and departed.

Hermione for her part just sat where she was and didn't move a muscle. She didn't know where to go or what to do.

"Hermione...?" Came a tentative voice from the side.

Hermione looked to the side and found Harry looking at her with trepidation, fumbling with his fingers, the sight of nervousness.

Hermione smiled sadly knowing she had a lot of explaining to do.

"Can we talk Harry?" Hermione said weakly.

Harry fumbled and sat down beside her, looking at her with love, adoration and reverence. For her part, Hermione wanted nothing more than to return those feelings and snog him senseless, but she couldn't, not with her duties as a Child of Prophecy.

"Harry, you have been faithful to me for a long time. You had over five years, if we include the time you spent in time compression, to forget me, to let me go; but you held on. Why Harry?" Hermione asked looking at Harry with genuine questions in her eyes.

Harry smiled weakly and looked away from her, staring intently at a particular pattern on the table, "I promised you 'Mione... I promised you that I would love you and be with you forever, till my last breath. I meant what I said, I wouldn't give up on you over a coma, I knew you would come back, no matter what. And you did..."

Hermione was trying hard not to cry at this point as she saw Harry nervously play with a splinter in the wood on the table, "Oh Harry..."

"Will you answer my question 'Mione?" Harry asked softly.

Hermione rubbed her wet eyes and nodded, only to see Harry wasn't looking at her to see her nod, so she took a deep breath and answered him, "Absolutely Harry."

Harry finally looked at her with deep hurt evident in his eyes, "Then tell me why won't you marry me? Why don't you love me anymore?"

Hermione felt her heart contract and then shatter into a million pieces. This was the opinion she had given her Harry after his months, no, years of loyalty and love; but what could she do, she was doing this so that in the future, it would be easier for him. She had to think of an answer to satisfy him for now, to placate him without destroying him.

"Because Harry... I'm not that girl who marries at sixteen, has a child as soon as she's out of school and then lives her life only for her family. I do envision a family, with you, and marriage, also with you, but there's still a lot of time for that. This is not the time, to get married and have children before even being finished with school, all out of fear of Voldemort." 'What the hell am I thinking?' Was the thought circulating in Hermione's mind.

Harry looked at her with wide eyes and laughed, he laughed loudly and a bit crazily, till he finally calmed down and looked at Hermione, "You think we're too young for marriage? Is that it?" He breathed a huge sigh of relief, "And I was thinking the worst possible reasons imaginable, ranging from you not loving me, to you loving someone else and never telling me, oh the thoughts are endless."

Hermione laughed at his stupidity and whacked him playfully on the head.

Harry looked at her in mock annoyance then turned his head up in arrogance, "First you refuse to marry me, then you try and get lovey-dovey with me. Let me tell you, Ms. Granger, I am not that kind of boy."

The two laughed together at that. Hermione then pushed Harry, causing him to fall off his chair, as she stood and ran away from him

"Oi!" Was his intelligent response.

"Yes Mr. Evans-Potter?" Came Hermione's strict impersonation of Professor McGonagall.

Harry smiled and laughed again, then he stopped and looked upwards at the ceiling of the Great Hall in quiet contemplation.

Hermione looked at him oddly, then spoke getting unnerved by his complete silence, "You know Harry, I can be more interesting than a ceiling..."

Harry looked at her in surprise, tearing his gaze away from the ceiling and smiled, then looked back, "I know Hermione, I was just thinking... You do know you are wrong about one thing?"

Hermione raised her eyebrows in surprise, "Oh and what might that be?"

Harry kept looking upwards as he answered, "We're not school-going kids anymore. I am already twenty years old Hermione, if you count my time in the Chamber, twenty-two, if you include the two years from my previous lifetime. Soon you will be twenty-one, when you come out of the chamber. We will look like fifteen and sixteen year-olds, but mentally, we will be much older, done with school and ready for a war."

Hermione gaped at his answer, she had not even considered that when she came up with an excuse for not marrying him.

Harry sighed loudly, "You are going to have five years Hermione. Five long years away from me, to think about 'us' and decide where you see 'us' going. I for one am rooting for marriage and maybe after five years of training, you might see us ready for marriage..."

With that Harry got up from the ground in one fluid motion and walked towards Hermione. He stood right in front of her, draped his arms around her waist and bent her downwards, facing her lips upwards. He slowly came down on her lips and met them with his own. It was their first kiss in ages, it was their first meeting in ages, but the magic between them was as strong as ever.

When Harry pulled away, Hermione had a dreamy-eyed expression on her face and a goofy-grin etched clearly.

Harry laughed and then threw Hermione over his shoulder, causing her to break out of her reverie and yelp in protest.

"Harry! What in the name of Merlin are you doing?" She said loudly, struggling to get to her own two feet.

"Taking you to the Chamber, Mrs. Soon-to-be-Potter."

Hermione stopped struggling and answered in a weak voice, "Already...?"

Harry laughed weakly, "The spell you used to maintain your body at full strength is going to wear off soon, it will take you a few weeks to get back to full strength. While in the Chamber, those weeks will pass by you in a blur. Then Luna and Dumbledore will train you and get you prepped for OWLs and NEWTs. Following which, you will receive Auror training, which is no easy thing let me tell you. Then by the time all of that is over, you will return to me, to the Real World. And then perhaps have an answer to my marriage proposal."

Hermione nodded weakly, again realizing Harry couldn't see her nod, "Yes Harry..."

The rest of the journey was silent, even if they got quite a few stares from passers-by as they saw Harry literally carry Hermione away like his booty. That strangely enough, excited Hermione.

"Here we are." Harry said stopping... somewhere, Hermione had no idea where.

He gently helped Hermione down who got unsteadily to her feet, to see Luna and Dumbledore regarding her with amused looks on their faces.

"Take care of her now..." Was all Harry said as he kissed Hermione soundly on the lips, then turned around and walked away.

Hermione watched his retreating figure in worry, then set her jaw, she would deal with it, as it came, right now she had other worries.

She turned to face her 'instructors' only to find the wall in front of her leading to a large brightly lit room and Luna and Dumbledore, were already beyond it.

"Come Hermione and get in bed, the spell's effect is going to wear off anytime now." Luna said urgently, patting the nearby bed.

Hermione sighed and nodded and made her way inside the chamber. She laid in bed for a few minutes and soon felt the effects of her spell wearing off. Her spell-induced energy and body mass, were fading away and soon just breathing seemed like a hard-enough labour.

"Albus," Luna said quietly.

"Yes Luna?"

"She's ready for recovery." Luna replied with a small smile.

Dumbledore sighed as he sat by Hermione's bed, "Get well soon Hermione, we have a lot to discuss."

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Great Hall

Day 1 – 06:00 PM

Harry Potter sat down with a heavy heart. It had been a long and confusing day for him, but he had withstood it all, for the sake of Hermione, he had to come home to her. But she came to him!

This thought brought a rare smile to his face, however, that quickly dimmed and disappeared completely as he remembered her reaction.

He convinced her that he was okay with her reasoning and debated it with a passion.

'For Merlin's sake! AGE! Age is what is stopping her from marrying me?' To say that Hermione's logic had floored him completely would be the understatement of the century.

However, he had separated himself from her to give her time to come back to him. He didn't want to monopolize her, he didn't want her to feel like she had no space and was being stifled into loving

him. If for some reason, she had decided she no longer loved him, Harry would leave her, he would let her go and pursue whatever dreams she had for herself and he would do it with a smile on his face.

Even if it tore him up from inside.

Even if he felt his innards falling apart and his heart being ripped out of his chest.

Even if it would mean giving up breathing.

He would do it for her, so long as she was happy...

His eyes had begun to moisten, but before he could get to them, someone else's hand dabbed at them with a dainty napkin.

Harry looked up in embarrassment and surprise.

Long dark hair, intelligent blue eyes and a slight smile graced the face of the girl that had come to him in his hour of need. Astoria Greengrass was determined if nothing else.

Seeing her standing there, Harry's entire demeanour changed. He sat up straight, his eyes were cold, hard and determined, his expression severe.

Astoria noticed the hardening of his resolve but decided to not comment on it, she had grown used to his recoil whenever she approached him. For Astoria had come to learn that Harry Potter gave his trust freely and completely, but when you lose it once, you lose it forever. Unfortunately, she had come to learn that the hard way.

She sighed and sat down beside him.

"Hello Harry." She said after a long pause.

Harry nodded imperceptibly and if Astoria had not been so used to his stoic reactions, she would've missed it, in fact, anyone else, any other sane person, would certainly have missed it, she was sure of it. The months after Hermione's condition were the darkest for Harry. He had withdrawn completely to himself. Getting him to even eat, at

all, had become difficult and no one had managed to break him, no one, except Astoria that is.

Astoria sighed again, "Did she tell you why?"

Harry's head whipped to face Astoria in an instant and though Astoria revelled in his attention, it did rent her heart that his attention to her was once again spurred by Hermione. She was always at the heart of everything concerning Harry, maybe because she was the one who had stolen his heart in the first place.

"How do you know about that?" Harry asked in a raspy voice, he hadn't spoken a word since he had left Hermione with Luna and Dumbledore in the Time Chamber.

"Daphne may have mentioned something, but even without her word, everyone had at least one comment to make regarding Hermione's virtually non-existent sense of humour. It did seem a bit odd though and well, it doesn't take a genius to put two and two together..." Astoria's voice trailed off and Harry's eyes narrowed.

Harry looked away from her as he answered, "She thinks we're too young to be married..." He said in a small voice.

Astoria looked at him with growing incredulity, "She thinks WHAT!"

The idea of anyone not willing to marry Harry over something as trivial as age seemed completely impossible to Astoria. After all, the younger you marry, the more time you have with your beloved.

Harry shook his head at her, "You wouldn't understand Astoria, its a muggle thing. While in the Wizarding World it is common, and sometimes even expected of wizards, to marry or betroth their children young, it is very frowned upon among the muggles, illegal even."

Astoria shook her head in wonder, "These muggles, they seem to have trouble with everything. Even marriage is a cause of such concern for them. Unbelievable."

Harry placed his face in his hands and shook with laughter. Only Astoria is capable of making him laugh at a time like this, only she

possesses the ability to do that to him, when all he wants to do is curl up in a ball and wail himself to death.

Astoria smiled seeing the happiness return to him, if only briefly. She had come to accept that she would never be the one to elicit permanent happiness in Harry. She was a mild sedative, she could numb the pain for a while, but it would return soon enough. Hermione, on the other hand, she was the elixir of his life, she gave him life-breathing energy that kept him from falling apart. Astoria knew this, accepted it even, but that didn't mean for a moment that she had to like it, or not be burning with jealousy every single time she thought of it either.

Astoria was aware she was treading a difficult path, but she was a Greengrass, keeping the balance and treading the fall came to her naturally.

"So", Astoria said genially, not even hinting to her sadness in the least, "What of when she returns from the Chamber, she'll be much older after all. Her issue about age," here she shook her head in disbelief again, "will no longer be valid."

Harry had sobered up from his laugh and at the continuance of the conversation, his expression dropped slightly, but the small smile never left his face.

"I have faith that she will think otherwise. Even if she doesn't though, I can live with it, as long as she's willing to be with me, when we get married is inconsequential." Harry said with finality.

Astoria nodded, dispelling the death threats to Hermione that she had created in the advent of another rejection of Harry's love.

"Are you curious about the trials Harry?" She asked trying blatantly to change the subject.

Harry's smile increased fractionally, "Quite, there are some trials that I'm eager about, others need to be addressed as well. Right now they are going through the minor Death Eaters, when its time for the Inner Circle members and the underage members, the trials will be conducted here in the Great Hall. Those I am definitely curious about."

Astoria nodded, "When do they start?"

"In a little while, the Wizengamot is working overtime right now because they want to convict as many Death Eaters as they can. With Dumbledore gone, they are free to punish as they please without any moral police. The Temporary Chief Witch, Augusta Longbottom, is seeing to that with a vengeance." Harry said a bit distractedly.

"Is... he... among them?" Astoria asked with a bit of trepidation.

Harry's jaw tightened infinitesimally, but that was enough indication to Astoria that even the minor mention of the betrayer foiled his mood.

"I'm not sure," Harry answered with gritted teeth, "but if he is, we will know soon enough and Susan will be allowed to exact her revenge on him."

Astoria sighed, "Revenge is not the answer Harry."

"Save it Astoria." Harry cut across her with finality.

She huffed, but nodded anyway.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Hospital Wing

Day 1 – 06:30 PM

Susan sat down on one of the pristine sheets in the Hospital Wing after Madame Pomfrey was through with her.

Her mind was still reeling with all that had happened in one day.

But there was one event that she was dreading and no matter how much she wished it to come and just leave her in peace, she knew it would wreck her. She had dreamt about gaining revenge on that monster she had given her heart to, but now that the time had come to collect her due, she was... scared.

Susan huffed in annoyance.

"Something the matter?" Came a low voice from somewhere nearby.

Susan looked up abruptly, her shoulders ready, wand in hand, mind strategizing and cataloguing all the exit points in case of attack.

A figure came from the shadows and Susan pointed her wand at it.

"Whoa Suse! Take it easy there." Said the voice.

Susan's wand didn't waver, "What was the nickname Hannah and you gave me in second year and what was yours?"

The figure smiled, "Why I believe it was Snoozy Susie and her sidekick, Justin the Doxie-Eater!"

Susan lowered her wand and the tension left her body instantly. A tiny, weak smile made it to her face.

"Heya Jus, how goes it?" She said easily.

Justin swooped down and sat beside her.

"Well, I feel great, Ian and I just had a little... rendezvous... in a broom closet and then I came here when Daphne told me I'd probably find you here. So, how are you?" He asked light-heartedly.

Susan's smile faded and she looked away, "I'm... I'm fine I guess. A little shaken up is all..."

Justin's eyes hardened and then softened instantly. He placed a finger below her chin and pulled her face sideways to face him. He wiped the tears threatening to overflow and distort her pretty face.

"You still love him." It wasn't a question.

That did it.

The waterworks leaked from Susan's kind eyes and she threw herself at Justin, wrapping her arms around him and pulling him closer.

"Yes, I do! How sick am I? In love with a man that tried to kill me and nearly succeeded! A man that has killed before and will continue to kill more innocent people for the sport of it! A wily snake that not only betrayed us all, but also killed one of his own friends! I still cannot look the Weasleys in the eye after what he did to poor Ginny!" Susan was going hysterical and Justin calmly stroked her hair, mumbling soothing nothings in her ear the whole while.

She calmed down and slowly, left Justin's embrace.

She wiped her red, puffy eyes with her hands, and smiled at Justin through the tears.

"Thanks Jus..."

Justin smiled, "That's what I'm here for Suse, now, do you really want to go through with this?"

Susan's expression turned feral, "I have to," she said in a deadly soft whisper, "I need to..."

Justin just nodded and hugged her again, much tighter than before and she was revelling in his embrace.

"Its going to be okay Susan, its all going to be okay."

They stayed like that for a while longer till Justin looked at his watch and hesitantly shook Susan.

She reluctantly let go of him and looked at his face questioningly.

Justin pointed to his watch with apology evident in his eyes, "Its time Suse..."

Susan placed her hand delicately on his watch and hid the time, they sat there, unmoving, for the longest time, till she looked back at him and nodded.

Justin placed his hand affectionately on her cheek and she moved into it more.

He came closer and pecked a kiss on her forehead. They were barely an inch apart. Susan's hands wound themselves around his neck and she pulled herself even closer to him.

His lips left her forehead and he looked down in to her eyes at the same time she looked up to see his.

The sea met the sky and in that one instant, they both felt something they thought incapable of each other and themselves.

Susan carefully rose up and softly placed her lips on Justin's. He was too shocked to move at first but soon responded. His arms wound around her waist, and hers strengthened around his neck.

They pulled each other impossibly closer, their lips moulding against each other's, both desperate for entrance, but neither willing to risk it.

Susan then removed herself from his face and looked at him with a crease on her brow.

"Well?" She said finally.

Justin looked at her with a thoughtful expression on his face, "Sorry Suse, still gay."

Susan smiled, then laughed and then guffawed loudly. Justin joined her soon enough.

It was with this atmosphere of intense tension and release that Susan felt she was ready to deal with whatever came ahead.

However before walking out of the Hospital Wing with Justin she stopped him and turned him to look at her, "We never breath a word of this to anyone, this never happened."

Justin nodded sagely, "I agree."

The two long time friends smiled at their new secret and left for the Great Hall, hand-in-hand.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Great Hall

07:00 PM

A loud banging was heard as everyone quietened at its sound. Someone cleared a voice and spoke.

"Witches and wizards of the Wizengamot, we are gathered here today to handle the harshest of Death Eater trials. I am Chief Witch Augusta Longbottom, presiding over committee, scribe is Serena Willow. Please bring the first case forward."

Nobody spoke a word as a nameless Auror brought forth an angry looking man and forced him onto the shackling seat with disgust evident on his face.

Madame Longbottom looked at him with disgust, "Rodolphus Lestrange, convicted Death Eater and escapee of Azkaban prison, your prior charges include the torture of one Auror Frank Longbottom and his wife, Alice, the killing of various muggles and magical beings. Now those have been expanded to include participation within the Ministry raid and the torture of late Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge. How do you plead?"

Rodolphus looked at her with disgust etched across his face. In response to her question, he spat at her.

Madame Longbottom, not missing a beat spoke to the Assembly at large, who were horrified at his actions. Augusta even noticed, from the corner of her eye, her grandson being held back by Harry, Daphne and Draco as he was reared to beat the offending bastard to death. She smiled with pride.

"All those in favour of the Death sentence?" She knew their protocol, it had been privately decided that these particular convicted felons would be showed no mercy like they were in the times long gone.

Unsurprisingly enough, every hand went up.

Augusta looked at Rodolphus neutrally as she pronounced his judgement, "Rodolphus Lestrange, for all your crimes, you are now going to pay in kind, with your death. Aurors please take him away."

She banged her gavel a little too sharply and ended the first of many more cases to come.

Harry sat back and watched in sick fascination as the hopeless cases were brought out and ended right from the beginning. Rodolphus Lestrage was soon followed in a speedy trial and death sentence by his brother, Rabastan, and wife, the infamous Bellatrix. It was disturbing to say the least that all three Lestranges were so unhinged, but they had all been in Azkaban around Dementors for long enough. Then again, you need to be pretty unhinged to land up in Azkaban in the first place, or severely unlucky, like Sirius.

Harry reigned in his wandering thoughts and saw the next person on trial and his interest perked up immediately, Lucius Malfoy was on trial.

Augusta sounded the gavel, "Lucius Malfoy, you were previously cleared of all charges when you pledged innocent based on the supposed application of the imperious curse. Now your crimes rank with participation in the raid on the Ministry of Magic, the essential build-up of the Concentration Camps set up for muggleborn witches and wizards, the murder of late Ministry employee one Perseus Weasley, torture and eventual death of Hogwarts student one Ronald Weasley, domestic violence against your wife, Narcissa Black and son, Draco Mal-Draco. How do you plead?"

Lucius looked at her with fascination, and if Harry hadn't seen it for himself, he never would have believed it, but Lucius gulped, visibly. However that moment passed as soon as it came. He smiled, he bloody smiled!

"Chief Witch, members of the Wizengamot, the Malfoy family has been part of the good, upstanding members of society for generations. We are undoubtedly traditionalists, but it has never been our inclination to cause harm to any magical being. Despite being part of such a distinguished lineage, I have not inherited the particular gift of strong will and control and could resist the pull of the Unforgivable, I was placed under the imperious," here Harry snorted audibly and was not surprised when he found that his snort was simply one of many, many more in the room, including Madame Longbottom herself, Malfoy however, seemed to remain blissfully unaware.

He continued, "The charges of domestic violence are simply outrageous. Narcissa and I had an unsuccessful marriage, but I stayed with her, for the sake of our son, Draco, her claims are false because she is still unhappy with the terms of divorce and the fact that she received nothing from the Malfoy fortunes. She was further enraged when I removed Draco from the Malfoy family line, making it impossible for her to ever lay her hands on my family fortune."

Harry stared at the man in disbelief, but snapped out of it quickly enough when he heard Draco yell, at the top of his booming voice, "You motherfucking LIAR!"

Well, that certainly got everyone's attention.

Chief Witch Longbottom whacked her gavel to no-end screaming for order. When the whispers and some outright conversations seized, she looked at Draco with annoyance, but he didn't even seem to notice as he seethed, glaring at Malfoy with a hatred that made Harry shudder.

"Mr. Mal-Draco, kindly make your way up to the witness square to make your point, if you have one." Augusta said with authority.

Draco seemed to snap out of his reverie when Daphne pushed him forward and forced him up to the witness square.

Once there, Draco glared at Lucius again, slowly words fell from his lips that completely destroyed Lucius' reasoning, "My mother Narcissa couldn't care less about the Malfoy line or fortunes, she hails from the Ancient and Noble House of Black, a much more distinguished line than the Malfoys. The last thing she needs is the Malfoy fortunes. She spent sixteen years in an unhappy and violent marriage because she had no way to get out of it. The then Lord Black, Orion, had her given to the Malfoys, only he or the Head of House Malfoy could lawfully end the marriage. Orion Black was killed in the First War, the only remaining Black was then convict Sirius Black, rotting away illegally in prison. She was choiceless. It wasn't until the new Lord Black," here he indicated to Harry, "dissolved her marriage, did she have an opportunity to escape. As for me, I was not kicked out of the Malfoy line, I was rendered a bastard by the breaking of their wedlock and I refused to rejoin the Malfoy line when offered by my father," he sneered at the word, "This man has tortured my mother for a decade-and-a-half, he has

put me through utter misery for his own amusement, he has performed the Dark Lord's bidding freely and I can vouch for that. He is the worst sort of Death Eater possible." Draco finished his speech in a whisper, but his words were loud and clear.

Silence. Utter silence.

"All those in favour of the death sentence?" Madame Longbottom asked breaking the silence.

Majority of the hands went up.

Lucius looked enraged, he glared at Draco hatefully and as he was being dragged out, his words rang clearly, "I'll get you, you filthy blood traitor!"

The next two cases took barely any time and weren't interesting in the least, Crabbe and Goyle were convicted without a second thought as they freely admitted their involvement and free will in the matter. This was followed by a lengthy speech explaining why muggles were unworthy and deserved death.

Here's the gist of both their speeches combined: They're muggles! What else do you do to them?

Finally the case that Harry was dreading the most appeared, the case of Blaise Zabini.

Blaise was dragged in by his tattered robes by an Auror, his face looked pale and colourless, his eyes ringed with dark circles and his skin dark and unhealthy unlike its usual shining self. His entire demeanour looked pained and tired.

He was placed on his seat and shackled as Madame Longbottom read out his crimes, "Blaise Zabini, you are tried for the betrayal of the Ministry to the Dark Lord, the attempted murder of one Susan Amelia Bones, participation in the raid on the Ministry of Magic and the murder of one Ginevra Weasley. How do you plead?"

Blaise looked at her sullenly and if Harry wouldn't have hated the snake so much, he might've felt sorry for him.

"Guilty," he said simply, succinctly and just like that, it was over.

Everyone looked at him in surprise and astonishment, every eye in the Great Hall was glued to his hunched and defensive posture, even Madame Longbottom seemed to lose her composure for a second.

Then she quickly regained it, "In that case, the Wizengamot must reach a verdict. All in favour of the death sentence?"

Several hands went up and Madame Longbottom seemed satisfied with the count, "although there is not an overwhelming majority, there is a two-thirds majority to carry out the sentence. Blaise Zabini, you are sentenced to de—"

"NO!" Came a shrill shriek from the back.

Harry whipped his head faster than most people, because unlike most people he could place that voice even in his dreams.

The person to contest the Wizengamot was none other than the person most affected by the case, the person claiming to have wanted Blaise Zabini's blood on her hands: Susan Bones.

Madame Longbottom looked at her with shock evident in her features.

"Susan, dear, what are you talking about? Are you well?" Came the incredulous voice of her aunt, Amelia Bones.

Susan, who had shot up when she screamed looked at Blaise and no one else. She didn't even register her aunt's words, or anyone else's stares, she had eyes only for one person, Blaise. Even after all he had done, she still loved him and she hated and berated herself every second that she did.

"Is there something you wish to say to contest the Wizengamot's decision Miss Bones?" Madame Longbottom asked kindly. She may be a strict witch, but everyone was aware of the involvement and heartache of Susan Bones with the Zabini case.

Blaise looked at her with broken eyes, but held her gaze.

The silence was deafening.

Justin whacked Susan on her backside and knocked her out of it, she looked at everyone staring at her surprised, she didn't even realize they were staring.

"Miss Bones?" Madame Longbottom asked again with a slight edge.

Susan looked at her quickly and answered what she assumed must have been her question, "I do not wish to question the Wizengamot, in fact, I endorse their decision whole-heartedly."

And she did. She completely agreed with them that Blaise deserved to die for what he did. But her heart wouldn't understand that, her heart still held onto the irrational belief that Blaise was innocent and all of it was just a bad dream.

"Why do you intrude upon its proceedings then?" Madame Longbottom was getting irritated now.

Susan looked at her saddened, burdened eyes, eyes one would rarely ever want to see on the pretty face of a sixteen year-old-girl.

"I wish to know why." She said quietly and then strengthened her resolve, "I wish to know why he did what he did? Why was I...," her voice cracked, "...we... Why were we not good enough? Why did he betray us, why did he betray me?"

People's eyes shifted back to Blaise and then tentatively to Madame Longbottom. Augusta was torn, she couldn't decide what to do, Susan's request was completely out of order and had nothing to do with the case, but...

"Although it is unorthodox and completely unrelated to the case at hand, I shall allow Miss Bones' question to be answered, do I have any opposition?" Madame Longbottom asked the Wizengamot at large, there was none.

She fixed her gaze on Blaise and in true purebloodedness, gave him a Malfoy-worthy sneer, "You have been posed a question by Miss Bones, kindly answer Mr. Zabini."

Blaise looked torn, he was trapped between a rock and a hard place.

He took a deep, shuddering breath, "Why? Why? Why did I betray you?" He leaned back in his chair, his face facing upwards to the enchanted ceiling that reflected a bright sunny, spring day outside, he smiled.

"Last year," he said, "last year before everything went to hell, I spent the last day of summer with my ex-girlfriend and later ex-fiancée out near the lake. The day looked eerily similar to the sky here in the Great Hall. Winter was settling in, but that was irrelevant, all my days were warm when filled with her. As we sat looking at the sunset on the last day of summer, I had her in my arms, she was sad. I asked her why and she said because the sun's warmth doesn't last, it always comes back, faithfully, but it does so to leave you bereft once again. But she still forgave the sun, because the sun had no choice in the matter, yet he still gave her his warmth and she appreciated that."

Susan stared at Blaise with undisguised shock, she herself didn't remember that conversation, she had blocked everything about him out of her mind, to numb the pain. She only remembered his assault, his evil and concentrated on it, to hopefully hate him forever, to feel no remorse as she exacted revenge.

"What does this have to do with anything?" Madame Longbottom asked exasperatedly.

Blaise looked away from the ceiling and looked at Augusta with his empty, blank expression, "Everything, I left my Susan bereft, because I didn't have a choice. Unfortunately, I cannot come back to her, she will not reaccept me like she does the sun everyday, because I cannot be forgiven. I broke Susan Bones' heart, to keep her alive. I am willing to die for her to move on. I betrayed because... I love Susan Bones and always will."

No one dared to speak, everyone looked at Blaise with shock and then Susan with barely disguised pity. Then... all hell broke loose as people whispered amongst themselves and thought of various implications. Harry was annoyed, in the next ten minutes, millions of rumours would be abound.

Madame Longbottom banged the gavel demanding silence.

She looked at Blaise with an unreadable expression.

"Professor Snape," she said without breaking eye contact with Blaise, "please administer the Veritaserum."

Snape appeared from nowhere and placed three drops of Veritaserum on Blaise's tongue. Blaise's head fell back and his eyes glistened over.

"What is your name?" Madame Longbottom asked.

"Blaise Mircin Zabini."

"Are you a marked Death Eater?"

"Yes."

"Did you voluntarily join the Death Eaters?"

"Yes."

"Did you deliberately attack Susan Amelia Bones and try to kill her?"

"Yes and no."

Madame Longbottom looked at him in confusion.

"Why did you attack her?"

"I was marked a Death Eater the summer before fifth year. I was told to infiltrate Potter's camp and give insider information to the Dark Lord. Then I fell in love with Susan Bones. When I was rejected by the phoenix during the induction ceremony, I had already rejected the life of a Death Eater for months. I knew I would not be accepted after the truth was revealed so I had to make my escape, but I couldn't go leaving Susan vulnerable. I knew I would be punished as soon as I got back to the Dark Lord, but he would gain sadistic pleasure in punishing my Susan to punish me further. So I attacked Susan Bones, I used a ceremonial blood ritual knife to carve a rune on her wrist. As long as my magic courses through her veins, no magical being possessing the Dark Mark can touch her with any spell or ill-intent."

Susan was completely numb at this point, she carefully brought her wrist to her eyes and looked at her Rune mark. She always figured it was just an odd cut he made while trying to slit her wrist. But in the new light of information, she saw for the first time what it was, a patent of blood magic, of protection, based on love.

She couldn't help it, her eyes filled with unshed tears.

Nobody had anything further to say.

"Why did you become a Death Eater?" Madame Longbottom asked in a softer voice.

"I am a Slytherin, I believe in self-preservation. Or at least believed in it before Susan." He paused for a short second, "the summer before fifth year, it seemed that the Dark Lord had won, Dumbledore had gone senile, Potter had gone round the bend and the Ministry was in denial. The winning side was the Dark. By the time I realized my mistake, it was too late." He finished on a quieter note, the black humour and irony of his situation was not lost on him.

"Did you kill Ginevra Weasley?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because she asked me to."

Shocked gasps were left simultaneously.

Arthur Weasley stood up angrily, Harry had never seen the normally jolly man look so entirely pissed off.

"Why would she ever ask you to do that!" He demanded with what can only be described as a grieving father's rage.

Blaise answered in a monotone that silenced the noisy crowd, "After marking Susan, I fought my way out of the Ceremonial Room on the seventh floor, barely escaping intact. Everyone assumed I tried to escape the school. In reality, I hid in the Hospital Wing. There I found Ginevra grieving the loss of her brothers. She was depressed because Perseus' body was sent from the Ministry after the raid.

More than anything else, she blamed herself for Ronald's death. She believed that because she berated Ronald endlessly for what happened to Hermione, he tried to set things right by bringing Bellatrix back with his Gryffindor courage and logic. He obviously died in the attempt, but Ginevra blamed herself for his idiotic actions. She knew about my betrayal at that point, but she didn't even try to turn me in. She just cried. When she calmed enough to speak, she asked me to kill her, so that I had a conciliatory victory to take back to the Dark Lord. She wanted to die and said that even if I wouldn't kill her, she would kill herself. I refused. She plunged a surgical knife through her stomach and bled, I was too slow to stop her. She was in pain and there was nothing I could do, so I tried to make it end fast. I didn't want her to feel herself bleed to death, so I killed her, painlessly, with the killing curse."

No one knew what to say to that.

Harry distinctly heard the Weasley twins, sitting a few rows behind him, heave deep breaths as they helped their older brothers hold their mother, who was sobbing uncontrollably. Arthur looked broken and he seemed unaware of the tears falling from his eyes endlessly.

"Did you ever mean for Ginevra's death or for your return to the Death Eaters?" Madame Longbottom asked finally.

"No."

With that one syllable, Susan closed her eyes to stop the tears, she held her wrist, marked by Blaise's love to her chest and faced upwards, to push the tears back.

The effect of the Veritaserum wore off and Blaise looked forward, his expression sullen and broken at his admission.

No one knew what to say. The only sound was Molly Weasley's loud sobs.

Susan, who had been standing the entire time, just couldn't handle it anymore. Her heart was right and the world was wrong, Blaise had loved her. He still loves her.

That was all she ever needed.

Without even thinking what she was doing, Susan ran with all her might to Blaise. People gasped in surprise, Aurors tried to hold her back, her Aunt shrieked in anger, Madame Longbottom banged her gavel for order.

But Susan didn't give a shit...

She ran up to Blaise and with a flick of her wand, banished the shackles. She caught his tattered robe-front, pulled him up and crashed her lips onto his.

Her hands fisted in his robes as chaos ensued around them, but she was oblivious to it, she was lost in her lover's embrace, she was lost in his arms.

Blaise wrapped his arms around her waist instantaneously and responded to her tantalizing lips with a newfound desperation. He felt like a man dying of thirst who just found the river of the Gods.

"Order! I will have order!" Madame Longbottom yelled.

Susan continued to kiss Blaise as if nothing else mattered.

Aurors literally had to separate the two and for the first time since being brought in the room, did Blaise react violently.

"Let me GO! SUSAN! SUSAN!" He called her name over and over as he pushed back on his chair and reshackled.

Susan was crying and sobbing like a heartbroken child.

Madame Longbottom asked Madame Pomfrey to take Susan to the Infirmary, but Susan adamantly refused to move till she got Blaise back.

Madame Longbottom looked at everyone in the room with tiredness evident in her eyes, "The statement provided by Mr. Zabini is doubtlessly true due to the Veritaserum. In the light of this, the Wizengamot will have to re-evaluate its decision of the Death sentence. All those still in favour of the death sentence, kindly raise your hands now."

Only a handful of hands went up.

Madame Longbottom sighed, "All those in favour of clearing the accused of all charges raise your hands." Several hands went up, "All those in favour of conviction." An equal number of hands rose.

Augusta turned to the scribe Serena who spoke to her in hushed whispers. Augusta nodded and faced the Wizengamot sternly.

"There is a vote of 11 convicting to 10 clearing."

Susan closed her eyes in denial, she could not handle losing Blaise after just getting him back, she would do something, she would run away with him, far, far away from Voldemort and Death Eaters. Everything!

"However," Madame Longbottom continued, "the quorum of the Wizengamot is 23, not 21, two members have not voted. Kindly rise and announce your vote."

The two non-voters looked reluctant, but rose nonetheless: Arthur Weasley and Amelia Bones. Susan's heart swelled with hope.

Arthur shifted uncomfortably when Amelia asked him to go first.

Arthur sighed deeply and spoke to the Assembly at large, "I blamed this man for the death of my daughter. I have lost three children to Death Eater in this war and I hope none of you have to ever endure the pain of losing a child, let alone three. I was told he killed her and I hated him. But now, he hasn't killed her. He was oblivious to her decisions. My Ginevra was always impulsive, she would jump headlong into a situation and worry about consequences later. I cannot blame him for her decision, he is not responsible for the onslaught of her grief, that was my responsibility as her father. I failed her. He just cushioned the blow for her."

Arthur stopped and took a deep breath, "I vote to clear the accused of all charges."

He sat down sadly and placed his head in his hands and sobbed softly.

Amelia stood there wide-eyed.

Madame Longbottom spoke, "The vote is now tied, Madame Bones, the final decision is yours."

Amelia turned and glared at Blaise, "I saw my niece die Mr. Zabini, that is entirely your fault. She is here physically, she is here mentally when we strategize and plan. Her spirit appears when she fights for our cause, but I lost my niece the day you cut her wrist. She was no longer the sweet, shy, determined girl that worked for everything she wanted, she became a shell of her former self, because of what you did to her. But I am a selfish woman Mr. Zabini, I know you will hurt her again, I will not allow it. If you swear a magical oath to leave the British Isles and never speak to Susan again, I will vote to clear you of all charges."

People broke out in raucous whispers, some stood and openly contested Amelia's right to make such an offer. Augusta was vainly trying to regain order.

Susan Bones was livid. "Aunty! How dare you—" but she was cut off.

"Are you deaf Madame?" Blaise said heatedly, his neutral mask replaced by naked, unbridled rage.

"Excuse me?" Amelia answered and the room quietened to listen to Blaise's answer.

"I. Am. Willing. To. Die. I don't care for life or death if I am not with Susan. I have done everything to keep her alive and now that the threat has passed, I need not bother living." He answered matter-of-factly.

Amelia stared at him with a hard expression, "What of your Slytherin idea of self-preservation?"

Blaise responded coolly, "I have no self to preserve if Susan is not with me. I'd rather die."

Susan's eyes brimmed over, again. She was getting far too emotional, but she couldn't help it, it had been a long day.

She whipped her head and stared at her defiantly, daring her to try anything else. Amelia returned her challenge with a defeated expression.

"I vote..." Amelia began faltering only slightly, "for the clearance of all charges."

Madame Longbottom banged her gavel, "By a vote of 12 to 11, Blaise Zabini is cleared of all charges."

Blaise stood up shakily from the chair and walked up to Susan with a wide grin. His legs were shaking, his body trembling, his eyes disbelieving.

Susan broke into a glorious smile, the kind of smile she hadn't had in a long time. She ran to Blaise, with every fibre in her body pushing her forward and pressed herself to him. She inhaled his scent deeply as he cautiously placed his hands on her face.

He was curiously examining every facet of it, fearful that the dream would end soon and he would lose her again.

He carefully brought her lips up to his and after tracing her lips gently, memorizing the soft and amazing feel of them, he kissed her deeply, and lovingly.

At that moment, Blaise's life was perfect.

At that moment, Susan's life was perfect.

Harry looked at the reunited couple with endless happiness, his heart however broke a tiny bit when remembering Hermione and how they might not share that kind of love.

"Your lips are my haven, your absence my hell,

What I am feeling, only you are able to tell,

You are my beloved, my destiny and fate,

Come home to me, I can no longer wait..."

REVIEW MY PRETTIES!

I was so not planning to redeem Blaise, I wanted Susan to be miserable but I decided to give her a happy ending, I felt like the tragedy of any situation will only lie with Harry, but that's for now. I also hope that answers some questions as to where some people are, what happened to them and so on and so forth.

I know there are some blaring plot-holes and what-not, but bare with me, this "happy ending" decision kinda struck me outta nowhere and I just went with it. I'm sure most of you know how plot bunnies go. That's why this chapter took so long, I had to figure out how I was taking this story forward.

I promise the next update will be sooner, maybe a week or two?

Review more and I promise an amazingly exciting, LONG chapter by Sunday next week.

Around 2-3 more chapters and we're going to be done people!

Kisses,

~ Gatonio.

Chapter 14

All I Ever Knew - Only You

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Time Chamber

Day (Year) 2

Hermione Granger sat at her recently conjured table and heaved a long sigh. It had been a year already since she had entered the chamber and even she could tell she had changed so much. Physically, exactly the same, but mentally and based on ability, she was far superior.

Magic truly is a wondrous thing...

She shook her head, dispelling the errant thoughts and concentrated on her work at hand. She was currently pouring over a NEWT-level text on Arithmancy Dumbledore had given her. She had recently given her OWLs in the presence of Dumbledore, who examined her. She was happy with her more than satisfactory grades: 11 Os and 1 E in DADA. Try as she might, she expected that to happen, after all, she was a formidable duellist only in Harry's accompaniment. Whenever he was with her, she was fuelled with this unbelievable desire to protect him and so she did, with every last fibre and being pulsating magic and energy within. A side effect of this over-protectiveness was her considerable duelling prowess.

Harry... She often wondered how he managed to pass his time here. Thinking about him caused her thoughts to digress further to certain aspects about him: his impish grin when she berated him, his calm expression masking his amusement when she looked at him in exasperation, his goofy, dreamy eyes when she kissed him when he least expected it. And of course, the hurt, betrayal and utter shock he displayed when she rejected him in front of all those people.

Hermione groaned at the memory and smacked her head on the book she was reading, she had acted so brashly and without any caution whatsoever. Harry was such a reserved person, always keeping himself and his emotions behind closely guarded walls. She had to fight tooth and nail to make her way there, and in one fell

swoop, she had guaranteed kicking her out from his heart by a distance that would never be overcome without lightyears of effort.

Her head still facing down on the book with her palms pressing the back of her head downwards, trying to bury it completely as she drowned in embarrassment at her actions. She had destroyed him, she knew it, she had thought of it repeatedly, she cursed herself and blamed herself completely and the worst of all, there was nothing she could do about it.

At remembering Chaos (the green-eyed monstrous bitch!), Hermione banged her head again and again, trying her level-best to somehow come up with a magical solution that would solve all her problems using the brilliant mind she supposedly possessed.

Of course after a year of analyzing the situation, her responses and so on and so forth, she knew exactly all the places she went wrong in, yet she couldn't change anything. All of it was beyond her.

She slowly stopped banging her head and lifted it slightly to slide a hand over her bumpy forehead and try and ease the pain there.

She still found it hard to digest all the changes that had come to occur.

She felt that the world would be beautiful and perfect, a world where her main troubles involved trying to suppress and subsequently deny her feelings for her best friend. A world where seeing her love plummet at exceedingly high speeds while sitting on a broomstick and attempting to catch a golden ball were the height of her worries and terrors. A world where turning in homework assignments efficiently and punctually was the epitome of her un-Harry-related concerns. A world where she sat in the Gryffindor Common Room, with a book and blanket in front of the fire, watching Ron successfully beat Harry at a game of Wizard's Chess.

Ron... She still couldn't believe Luna's explanation of what happened to him when Hermione casually asked what became of him. Ron, Harry and she had a falling out, but she knew she would give her life for Ron if it came down to it. Four years of friendship did mean something to her, even if it meant nothing to Ron. Apparently she had fulfilled that part of her promise, she stayed in a coma for months as she tried to save Ron. She sighed remembering Luna's

description of the state of Ron's body when it was portkeyed into Hogsmeade. He had gone to avenge her, or alleviate his guilt, Hermione wasn't specifically aware of the clear motive, but it was probably a mix. He had perished, so young, so before his time.

And Ginny! Poor Ginny! She had already put herself through so much, the rejection she felt every time she looked at Hermione, the pain of having one's heart broken is a terrible curse, Hermione was aware of that. However, she would never wish that kind of fate Ginny met with, not even on her enemies. She was killed by Blaise Zabini, a surprise as far as Hermione was concerned.

Somehow, she knew she was intricately tied into all of these outcomes and for the first time, she understood why Harry constantly blamed himself for everything falling apart around him. It was in his nature to protect that which he loved, as was in hers. If only they could return to the simpler times, when things weren't close to as complicated as now...

No... She could not dwell on the past, it was gone. She had her memories, but they would have to suffice.

"Oh my Hermione, it seems you're developing heavy bruising on your head." Came the serene voice of Luna Lovegood.

Hermione looked at her sheepishly, "Yeah, I might have just lost track about pain while punishing myself for things beyond my control. The usual..."

Luna clicked her tongue in disapproval, "You know better Hermione."

Hermione just smiled at her.

Luna sat down at the desk where Hermione was reading and pulled out her own book. The two read in companionable silence for some time.

After what seemed like ages Hermione looked up at Luna and asked the question that had been burgeoning in her for so long, "Luna, could I ask you something?"

Luna looked up from her book unconcerned. She shrugged in acceptance and went back to her book.

Hermione considered that a yes, "Um... If you don't mind me asking, what happened between Draco and you?"

Luna instantly tensed, but eased it off immediately. She slowly raised her head from her book and looked Hermione straight in the eye, "We had something very special, and I hope we still do... But as the Head of the Order of the Phoenix, I needed to concentrate my efforts on the war and not myself. Draco understands that and accepts that. Hopefully, someday when Voldemort is no longer harassing us, we may have a future."

Hermione smiled at her and nodded understandingly. She turned back to her book and immersed herself in reading only to be interrupted by an equally interested Luna.

"What about yourself Hermione? We all know how much Harry dotes on you and vice versa. Why did you leave him? Or rather reject him? There must be a reason."

Hermione looked up from her book guiltily. "I don't know what you mean. I love Harry. I really do. But like you, I have some duties to fulfil and they involve putting Harry first, so that is exactly what I am doing."

Hermione knew her answer made absolutely no sense, but she knew Luna's mind worked differently than most people and a senseless answer would suffice her, or it used to, this new, insightful, focused Luna was very different to what Hermione was used to.

"There is a time for love..."

Hermione looked at Luna oddly and found Luna staring at her intently. Hermione squinted her eyes in confusion, trying to understand what Luna had just said to her, "What do you me-"

"There is a time for war,

A Reprieve from bloodlust,

Evil is evident,

The good is with the daughter,
Prophecy shines, opportunity arrives,
The chalice's drink of death inaugurates the winner,
The time of love is now..."

Hermione stared open-mouthed at Luna as Luna daintily shook her head and came back to Earth.

"Sorry Hermione, I got distracted for a few minutes there." She looked at Hermione funnily noticing her wide eyes.

Luna smiled and continued, "You could just tell me why you are surprised."

Hermione's mouth snapped shut, she closed her eyes and took a deep breath. Luna knew she was having an internal debate, trying to decide the best course of action. Luna was content to let her figure this out herself.

Hermione opened her eyes after a few minutes and looked at Luna sharply, "You just made a prophecy."

If Luna was surprised, she didn't show it, she simply shrugged and indicated Hermione to continue.

Hermione looked down at the table and mumbled something unintelligible.

"Oh dear! Hermione I think the Wrackspurts are corrupting your vocal cords." Luna said this with utmost seriousness.

Hermione looked back at Luna and cracked a grin, she repeated herself a little more loudly this time, "I said that your prophecy spoke of my role in the war. It signified... what I must do."

Luna fixed Hermione with a blank stare, internally she was calculating and evaluating.

"Hermione, have you cross-referenced your prophecy or prophecies' interpretation with someone else?"

Hermione's eyes narrowed slightly in confusion, "No... not really anyway. Why?"

Luna sighed, "Hermione there are several different interpretations of ways of understanding a prophecy. More often than not, the prophecy is self-fulfilling and it runs its' course. We can neither stop it, accelerate it nor control it. In fact, even our interpretations at best are shoddy and sometimes completely off the mark. Not taking another's opinion on a prophecy leaves you open to massive opportunities of misinterpretation. This can be fatal for a number of people. Thusly, we have a Prophecy Deconstruction group in the Order. They run and manage to make sense of all the prophecies that we may or may not consider as part of the war."

Hermione pondered the information Luna had just given her, and as Luna continued speaking, she unconsciously began nodding her head.

"That makes a lot of sense Luna... Perhaps you are right. Perhaps I do need an alternate opinion, for the sake of my sanity as my interpretation barely gives me any hope."

Luna smiled brightly, "Ah... Finally you agree Hermione. I shall inform Headmaster Dumbledore of the favourable development in your attitude and we can sit down and discuss this."

Hermione could only smile slightly and nod.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Room of Requirement

Day 2

Harry sat face down on his training mat. He wasn't really tired, he was just feeling... empty. He sighed for what must have been the millionth time that day as he turned over and looked at the sky-like ceiling of the Room of Requirement, that looked eerily like the Great Hall right about now.

If he was being honest with himself, he was scared. Voldemort was still out there, the magical population was being misled and confused by the various propaganda rampant everywhere. A large number of the Death Eaters had gotten away from them. No doubt, Voldemort would be back soon enough.

Sigh...

All of it paled in front of the seemingly enormous problem he was facing with Hermione. Everything was supposed to be so simple. He was coming back in time to live the life he should have had, but now, everything just seemed to be falling apart around him. He just couldn't understand why no one was willing to give him a break.

Hermione and he had faced unimaginable odds, and despite it all, still managed to steal away some time to be together as lovers. She was his soulmate and he was sure of it. Then why was everyone and everything conspiring to screw things over for him?

It was at times like these that he really wished Chaos was around; she would always knock some sense into him. He missed the deranged Goddess who became giddy at the mere mention of complete and utter chaos everywhere. It was disturbing to say the least, but he found it adorable, in a way, a very special way that only Chaos would exhibit.

A loud snort came from in front of him and Harry immediately stood up, his battle senses on full alert as he noticed the intruder. The minute he saw him however, all the worry ebbed away and he just gave him a wry smile.

"Don't sneak up on me again Draco, you know how edgy I tend to become." Harry said calmly, returning to stare at the sky again.

Draco laughed and went to lie down beside Harry.

"Well its good to know you are training so hard." He gave his sarcastic titbit.

Harry just rolled his eyes and didn't bother to dignify that with a response.

Silence stretched between the two but it wasn't awkward, although there was an undertone of tension that Harry could feel from a distance.

"Just tell me what's wrong Draco." Harry finally relented.

Draco smiled and looked to the ceiling-sky, shaking his heads as if in disbelief at the naivety of the supposed hero in front of him.

"Come on Harry, I think you know its obvious."

Harry just shrugged lightly, "I'm a good Occlumens Draco but you are the amazing Legilimens among us, I'm pants at it and you know that."

Draco just shook his head in further bemusement, "We're worried Harry."

Harry sat up and looked at his side to see the genuine concern in Draco's face.

He looked away and said, "there's really nothing to be worried about. I'm fine."

Draco snorted in a very undignified, un-Malfoy-like manner, "Well Harry, do you want me to extract a pensieve memory to remind you about the last time you said you were fine?"

Harry turned and looked at Draco curiously, he understood the sarcasm, but didn't know what it was directed towards. Draco, seemingly understanding his lack of comprehension decided to elaborate.

"After the Hogsmeade raid, I came and asked you the exact same question and you had the exact same answer. However, this was followed with your three different attempts at suicide, all failed of course, but the failures had little to nothing to do with resistance on your part." Draco ended in a whisper, all humour evaporated.

"I wasn't committing suicide Draco, you know that." Harry said seriously, in a small voice, he did not like to be reminded of the black time, when Hermione was...he winced involuntarily.

Draco placed a hand firmly on Harry's shoulder, forcing him to turn completely, "Now you say that suicide had nothing to do with all those attempts. You look me in the eye and guarantee me that on the three separate occasions we found you completely devoid of blood and on the brink of death were unintentional."

Harry looked away with his head lowered.

Draco had a smug look, "I thought so."

Harry sighed, again, "Fine I agree, my thoughts at that time were... somewhat... morbid," seeing Draco's readiness to correct him he reluctantly added, "alright fine, they were downright depressing and suicidal. I wanted to die because everyone around me kept telling me that Hermione was going to die. I couldn't... I just couldn't deal with that, okay? Her core was going to die out in the next week or so, we had so little time. I looked up the ritual to maintain someone's magical core indefinitely. If another, more powerful core was willingly sacrificed, she could have lived on, her stasis could be removed and her life saved as her renewed core would have protected her. It was the only way barring her just waking up and being okay like she did. I had to do something."

Draco clicked his tongue, "And you are honestly telling me that you cannot understand why we're worried about you? You, my deranged, lovesick friend, were trying to justify suicide as a means to save the woman you love. Astoria walked in on you halfway through the ritual when you were about to pass out and saved you. Fawkes forced Luna to come to you when you nearly died out of blood-loss again and the last time I had the misfortune of walking in on you with a slit wrist in the middle of a Rune Circle in the Quidditch Pitch! Which reminds me, why the Pitch?"

Harry rose from the deep hole Draco was systematically burying him into with his long, long list of reasons, "Oh... uh... Fawkes would not be able to sense me easily out of the main Castle. The Pitch just seemed a good place to go at the time, well, better than the Forbidden Forest where my body might've been eaten by whatever resides in there."

Draco shook his head in bemusement, "Again Potter, the convoluted workings of your mind frighten me to a new level."

Harry looked at Draco with a sheepish grin, "For all your nagging, it did work out in the end. Dumbledore tried to talk me out of suicide, again, and we fought, again. He spoke to me about the fate of the Wizarding World, I told him the Wizarding World could go fuck itself. From then on he just stared in abject horror and anger. When he realized that I was desperate enough to continue trying and that sooner or later I would succeed, binding prophecy or not, he surprised me yet again."

Draco nodded as if in an afterthought, "I know. The Old Man finally earned my respect at least. I always thought of him as manipulative and a complete prick. But his heart, however misguided, was always in the right place. He wanted to save as many people as he could. He couldn't do that without you and in the spirit of true Utilitarianism, he gave up his left arm to keep Hermione alive. He's a complete asshole and probably has a God complex, but he's still a good man nonetheless."

"Well it did teach me not to get in a duel with Dumbledore." Harry said in thought, "The amount of magic that man has in his left arm was the equivalent of the magic in me. I'm just glad he did what he did, to keep Hermione's core alive."

"And so stopped your suicidal attempts." Draco ended sarcastically.

Harry looked at him sharply, "Really Draco, I know it was over the top and selfish of me, but give it a rest, I learned from it and everything is okay now."

Draco exhaled a loud breath in exasperation, "Come on Harry! Wizen up at least a tad! What do you think would have happened had you succeeded in your crazy attempts?"

Harry closed his eyes, "I try not to think about it..."

"Well let me paint the picture for you then. Wizarding World would have lost its hope and we would have given up. Thousands of families would have been ripped apart. We would probably be in anarchy under Voldemort. You would be remembered as the Coward Gryffindor Hero who condemned us all. Muggleborns all over would be hated with renewed enthusiasm, as they would all be sullied because of Hermione that was the cause of your downfall. Despite it all, if Hermione would have woken up after your ritual, how

long do you think she would have stuck around living?" Draco said in a huff.

Harry looked at Draco with wide eyes, "What do you mean? She would take the first exit out of England and to Australia. She would be sad but she would get over it and move on with her life."

"Oh and she would never blame herself for your death? For everyone in Wizarding England dying because the prophesised One to defeat Voldemort died by his own hand for her sake? She would actually turn tail and run when everyone she knows and loves is in a time of crisis? I don't know which Hermione you are talking about, but the Hermione I know would prefer to have died fighting, a true Gryffindor at heart." Draco said relatively calmly, but every one of his words struck Harry.

"Fine, everything would have probably gone to hell and none of us would have survived the war. I see that now. Hell I saw it years ago when we were in the Time Chamber training. Somewhere along the line, I knew I made my peace with her dying. I realized how stupid I had been acting and I was willing to do my best to save her, but not at the cost of everyone else. After all, she would have never approved to having her life over someone else's. Sometimes I think she's too noble for her own good. But she's back now, of her own accord! I'm fine too! Voldemort's gone for now, everything is going to be fine." Harry realized he was ranting by the end of his little saving-face spiel.

"Wow Harry, is that what you tell yourself every night before you go to sleep? 'Everything is going to be fine', 'Voldemort is scared of pink ponies' and 'the world is full of sunshine and daisies'. Come on, look in retrospect, nothing is ever fine forever, especially when it comes to you. That's my philosophy, hope for the best but prepare for the worst." Draco said angrily.

Now Harry was beginning to get annoyed, "Well, Draco, I don't say that to myself but I like to reassure myself. A little hope takes you a long way. As if you're one to talk anyway! I remember the look on your face when Luna told you she needs a 'break' to save the world from Snorkack extinction because Voldemort would obviously target them first."

Draco looked into the distance, "Yes my face must have been priceless then. I was confused, I didn't know if I should be angry, crying, desperately pleading her not to leave me or laughing my head off at her logic. But no matter what, I knew that she would come back to me, ultimately, my faith was unshakeable in that matter."

Harry looked away in silence, "I believed that too, but now, I just don't know Dray... She told me she thinks we're too young! I mean come bloody on!"

Draco chuckled at that, "She always was a terrible liar."

"Tell me about it." Harry deadpanned.

"Harry, listen to me. She loves you. Hell, she stared down and reducto'd Voldemort's head off as soon as she got up from an almost-death coma, she does really care about you. She may be withholding some of the cards, but she has a good reason for it. She will tell you when the time is right."

"That's what Dumbledore used to say, look where that got us." Harry mumbled under his breath.

"What was that?"

"Nothing, nothing. I'll be fine Dray, for real, I will be a-okay." Harry said reassuringly.

"Well I hope so, because as soon as I get out of here, I am going to be accosted by some very worried people who will all doubtlessly accost you at some point or the other."

Harry groaned in frustration, "Doesn't everyone have something better to do? Like catching Death Eaters and what-not?"

"Dear, sweet, naïve Harry; you trump Death Eaters any day. After all, they love you and are protective of you. Then again, you might be the first person I've heard of being literally loved to death."

As Draco spoke he got up and left the Room and behind him, he sensed Harry drop down on the mattress and thrash around like a petulant child.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Hogwarts Greenhouses

Day 2

Neville Longbottom was potting some very dangerous plants as he contemplated his current situation. In the matter of a few months, he had gone from being called 'Magically-Impaired' to a formidable Auror. He had lived years of his life and gained years of experience. At that moment, he was potting some vicious Mandrakes into new soil in order to keep them ready for a Hogwarts Attack.

To Neville's great delight, he had discovered the reason behind his almost limitless ability in Herbology, he was an Earth Elemental wizard. On first learning of this little fact, Neville was excited, he thought it meant he could control the Earth and bend it to his will like in the many stories he had read as a child. However, that was not true. Natural Magic was held in a delicate balance and any mere wizard trying to tamper with its balance would be destroyed. The Magic in Nature bends to none, it is wild and free. His Earth Elemental skill only implied that he was able to better sense his battlegrounds. He could predict the best possible outcomes for plant growths in particular areas and suggest natural means to improve their health instinctively. In other words, it made him a Herbology prodigy, not an Earth-moving megawizard.

Now that was disappointing, but his limited abilities had their advantages as well.

He could control some of the more dangerous plants with little or no effort, like Mandrakes. Normally evil and bone-chillingly maddening creatures were calm and docile in his company. They just doted on him, like all his other semi-sentient plants. In fact Neville sometimes felt that he could feel the plants speaking to him, giving him advice and protection. Being an Earth Elemental didn't make him a master, it made him a favoured charge of the earth.

Neville was still worried about Harry though. Harry had changed so much from what he remembered. From being the shy, quiet, mediocre Gryffindor, unwillingly thrust into the limelight, he became the powerful leader of the Defense Association and now the semi-

depressed General of their war. Neville still shuddered remembering the Black months of Harry's severe depression. When Astoria recounted the story of how she found Harry nearly dead, Neville was in tears, but he had no time to control himself, as he was busy restraining Daphne who wanted to 'kill the bastard for trying to kill himself'. Neville didn't think it prudent to point out the irony in her words at that time.

Daphne... The fiery blonde that had changed everything in Neville's life. She was cunning and intelligent, fiercely protective of those she loved and unquestionable beautiful in every respect. Neville was smitten from the day he accidentally crashed into her after DADA Class. She had made him a man, her man.

A little while later, the last Mandrake had been potted and Neville absent-mindedly scratched its chin as it cooed in approval. He was dazed thinking about his lovely Daphne and the way he loved her. Slowly, he rose and made his way out of the Greenhouse, he barely made it two steps when the most beautiful voice in the world stopped him.

"How goes it Mr. Longbottom?"

Neville turned and smiled widely. There she stood in all her natural glory. Her wild, blonde hair was shining like melting gold in the sunshine, splayed across her dainty shoulders. Her body covered in ceremonial Slytherin robes, hiding the true curves that she withheld under those robes. Thinking about her body, her robeless body caused another part of Neville's body to react and Daphne chuckled.

"Why Mr. Longbottom, is that your wand in your pocket or are you just happy to see me?" She asked casually.

Neville had the decency to blush and adjust his robes to hide his noticeable reaction to the mere sight of his own personal goddess. He did this amidst peals of Daphne's laughter.

She seductively walked towards him, she placed a hand on his chest as she pushed him towards a secluded tree hidden from the castle behind the Greenhouse.

Neville could only walk backwards obediently, all rational thought having left his mind a while ago.

She backed him against the tree, then very slowly pushed herself against his chest and claimed his lips with her own. Neville's response was instantaneous, he wrapped his arms around her tiny waist as he hoisted her up and pulled her closer. She didn't seem to mind at all as she kissed him with greater vigour. Her tongue darted out as she licked the bottom of his lip. Neville gladly obliged and opened his mouth for her touch. Their tongues danced, fighting to please and tease, as they gave each other more and more pleasure.

"Mmm... Neville, I think I need to fix your little problem." Daphne said in between deep breaths.

Neville's wise response, "Uh-huh..."

Daphne chuckled to herself as she let her hands roam Neville's broadening chest. He shivered under touch and soon her hands went lower and grasped his engorged member.

Neville groaned. Loudly.

Daphne smirked as she thought of all the things she was going to do to him.

Daphne pulled on her robes in a haphazard manner as she fruitlessly tried to straighten them out. Try as she might, she could not seem to get the creases out. Any passer-by could clearly tell what she had been up to with her wrinkled clothes, dishevelled hair and large, goofy grin.

She felt arms wound around her waist as she leaned into her lover's embrace.

Neville sighed as if finding eternal peace.

"Why is it that everything seems glorious when I'm holding you?" Neville asked in a quiet voice.

Daphne smirked as she snuggled into him, "I could ask you the same question love."

Neville chuckled at her response but posed no question further. Deciding to bask in her affection in the late evening sun was a perfectly acceptable alternative in his opinion.

As the sun set Daphne looked at Neville with a shining eyes, "You really love me don't you?"

Neville only smiled faintly, "Let me put it this way love, if something ever happened to you, I would make Harry's attempts seem like unripe tomatoes compared to a harvest."

Daphne's expression turned hard, "Neville... You can't do that."

Neville stared at her oddly, "Excuse me?"

Daphne sighed as she moved out of his embrace. She felt him protest to the change in seating position and had to physically extract herself from him, while he struggled half-heartedly to hold on. Daphne assumed he sensed the need to have a 'talk' coming up and so he let her go without enough of a fight.

"Daphne?"

"Listen to me Nev, I need you to promise me something."

Neville smiled impishly, "Anything for you."

"If something does happen to me," his expression immediately turned sour, "I cannot have you pull a Harry."

"Any why, pray tell, bloody NOT?" He sneered in response.

Daphne was taken aback by his sheer anger. Neville had never taken such a tone with her, even in the worst of times, he had been calm and docile, allowing her to rant and scream but he always just listened and reasoned with her, or at least attempted to reason with her. Usually he accepted her reasoning, but this kind of reaction from him was very new for Daphne. If she was being honest with herself, she was actually a bit scared.

"Nev...?" She asked uncertainly, not knowing what to say exactly.

Neville's expression softened, realizing the effect he was having on her, "Daph, I love you. Simple as that. Nothing is going to change that, ever! We Longbottoms, we're the quiet kinds, but our quietness is not to be mistaken for cowardice or disloyalty. We are fighters for the Light and Love. You are and always will be everything for me Daphne and no one, not even you, can change that. So don't you dare ask me to not die for you, because I would do it in a heartbeat."

Daphne only nodded dumbly as she felt tears prick her eyes.

"Neville..." She resumed, closing her eyes and trying to dispel the moisture there, "We have to prepare for the worst, I love you Neville and I hope it never comes to that as well, but... But if things go pear-shaped, I want you to find happiness regardless."

"You Ms. Greengrass are my happiness", he kissed her left eye, "my love", her right eye, "my hope", her nose, "my light", her left cheek, "my magic", her right cheek, "my home."

He paused then gently kissed her lips.

Daphne was speechless, she had no words to describe the feelings evoked inside of her by this man, this man who had apparently fallen in love with her.

She tightly wound her arms around his neck as she kissed his soundly. When he finally let up a bit she pecked his lips gently.

Neville frowned as he gently brought his large hands to wipe away the tears streaking her face. "I'm sorry I made you cry."

Daphne shook her head in amusement, "tears of happiness Neville..."

Neville looked at her in confusion, "Tears are tears Daphne and I'm sorry I made you cry. I hate to see you cry." He said while furiously, yet lovingly wiping away her tears, not realizing his words were slowly making the ice-queen of Slytherin melt in his arms.

She shook her head in disbelief and muttered softly, "Only you Neville..."

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Library

Day 3

Astoria Greengrass was not a happy witch. She was currently sitting in the farthest corner of the Library, attempting, unsuccessfully, to bury herself in reading and not pay attention to her surroundings. If she were to be honest with herself, which she rarely was, she was scared.

The Greengrass family were not a noticeable, powerful or exceptionally wealthy family, though they were Purebloods nonetheless. Realizing the blind subservience demanded by the Dark Lord was not to their liking and the hopeless refuge offered by the Light during the First War was insufficient, they preferred to be neutral. However, all of those ideals had gone out the window when Daphne had fallen in love with a Light family scion.

Astoria shook her head thinking of her sister's antics. They were brought up primarily by their mother, their father was too often busy in having dalliances on the side. But their mother had never cared. She just shrugged in acceptance and constantly told Daphne and Astoria to marry someone they actually loved and not because of blood purity or wealth. At the end of the day, none of it really mattered. Astoria and Daphne had both taken their mother's words to heart, but they were a Slytherin and Ravenclaw for a reason. They understood the need for love in a marriage, but they also appreciated the need to have a neutral spouse in order to not get entangled in any one else's agenda.

Astoria sighed in exasperation, well, that had been the plan anyway, never mind they both had completely botched it up beyond repair.

Daphne was involved with Neville Longbottom, the boy was as Light as you could get, about a step behind the Weasleys in blind fealty to the Light. But Astoria could not fault her sister, after all, she was no better. In fact, for all intents and purposes, she was much, much more worse off.

Daphne may have only fallen for a follower of the Light, but Astoria, she had fallen for the man that damn well created the Light!

Daphne's love, however uncalled for, was requited, she was happy, but Astoria was not only in love with someone who had a death sentence spelled on his forehead, but also was clearly in love with someone else and she knew it!

Astoria shook her head in dismissal; her errant thoughts regarding the futility of trying to control one's emotions never did her any good. She always ended up promising herself that she would move on from Harry Potter, she vowed to find someone neutral and run away from war-torn Britain as soon as the opportunity arose. However, one look into those green eyes and she was undone. She knew that it was more than a mere crush, Astoria may only be fifteen years old, but she was aware that whatever she felt for Mr. Potter, was more than just passing adolescent feelings. At first she was enamoured with his shy personality and fierce bravery, it was only her dignity and pride that prevented her from dropping to the Weasley level of hero-worship. But now that she knew that the Boy-Who-Lived-to-be-Haunted was actually a broken man who had no faith in life beyond the love of his beloved, she could not help falling more in love with him. The girl he loved had been his best friend for years; he had never even bothered to try anything with anyone else because he was so sure. Even after knowing that she would probably never get up from her death-coma, he clung onto her with a renewed passion. His love never flickered; it never diminished, even by a fraction.

Such blinding loyalty and love, could anyone really blame her falling for this man?

Astoria sat back in her chair with her head facing upwards, not even bothering with her façade of trying to look busy anymore.

"Working hard I see?" Came a mocking voice from somewhere beyond here.

Astoria lazily brought her head forward and stared at the owner of the voice, she could recognize that voice anywhere, "Hello Daphne, don't you have anything better to do with your time than bother me? Like shag your boyfriend?"

Daphne smiled wickedly at her, "Actually we already did that yesterday and then again in the morning and about-"

Astoria clamped her hands on her ears, "For the sake of my sanity, spare me the gory details!"

Daphne shrugged, "Sister dearest, you were the one asking if I recall correctly."

"One of my many mistakes..." Astoria mumbled under her breath.

If Daphne heard that she didn't acknowledge that she did. She boldly walked forward and sat down in front of her.

"Onto more pressing matters, what is it between you and Emo-Golden Boy?" She said and once again Astoria was taken aback by her sister's bluntness.

For all her Slytherin cunning, she had the subtlety of a Gryffindor that probably explained a lot about her choice in boyfriends anyway.

"First of all, he is not 'emo', second of all there is nothing for me to do. We have never been in a relationship, nothing akin to it, his faith in Hermione", she grimaced at the name, "is utter and binding, he will never falter."

Daphne sighed exasperatedly, "True true," she made an airy, dismissive gesture with her hand before continuing, "Well firstly, someone who has attempted suicide as many times as he has definitely has some issues. Secondly, his faith in Hermione though unquestionable is not the centre of this discussion in fact; it's the other way around. What of her faith in him? Her faith in their 'love'? Her desire to actually have something with him? She did turn down his marriage proposal in front of all those people."

Astoria shook her head in disgust at her sister, "Really sister, is this all the loyalty you have towards them?"

Daphne looked at her sharply, "I look at my own first, and then I look at the rest of the world. You are my own Astoria, so it would be in your best interest to understand and appreciate that fact."

Astoria was stunned by her sister's answer but she didn't show it, she was long since expected not to display emotion unless absolutely necessary, "Hermione's feelings are unimportant in this

matter Daphne. Harry will love her regardless. If she tells him she wants to marry him and pop his babies a dime a dozen, he will get a ring in a heartbeat, if she tells him she fell in love with an albino vampire and is addicted to shagging cold dicks, he would turn into a vampire for her and drink a fairness enhancing potion for the rest of his life. As absurd as it is, he will follow her no matter what. He may be one of the most powerful wizards of our age, but she is far more powerful, because she can tug at his heartstrings and make him do her bidding. Amidst all that, I have no hope to find a place or acceptance as anything more than a close friend in Harry's life."

Daphne simply listened quietly at Astoria's explanation, although she did crack a grin at some of Astoria's more creative analogies to describe Harry's devotion to Hermione.

"Do you remember what Mother used to say when she forced us to have back-up paperwork to claim different names and lineages and an emergency escape portkey to France when You-Know-Who's return was formally recognized?" Daphne asked quietly.

Astoria quirked an eyebrow but nodded, "Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst; Slytherin's famous last words."

Daphne winked at Astoria conspiratorially, "You may not be a Slytherin Astoria, but you would do well to take a page from the book of one of the most cunning men of all time."

With that said Daphne stood up abruptly and dusted her robes of invisible dirt and smiled before turning around and walking away, "I'm off little sister, Neville dear needs a little more release."

She chuckled as she saw Astoria's grimace and Astoria for her part just shook her head and got back to taking notes on some more healing charms and spells. Call her paranoid, but she had a feeling she'll be needing them soon enough.

"Stupid girl and her stupid ideas..." Astoria mumbled under her breath every now and then as contemplated her sister's words.

Try as she might, she could not prevent thoughts from drifting off to a world where she was the object of a certain green-eyed boy's affections and a bushy-haired know-it-all never existed.

Huh.... She sighed again... Wishful thinking, thank Merlin for small mercies.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Time Chamber

Day (Year) 3

"But that doesn't make any bloody sense Professor!" Hermione exclaimed exasperatedly.

Dumbledore looked at her oddly, sizing her up with his cool, intelligent blue eyes as he considered her words. He cleared his throat and responded.

"A chalice is a traditional reference to a woman Miss Granger. In many great legends and histories, the chalice is often a woman's womb that can breed the greatest of fighters and preachers to bring the dawn of a new age. It is the most understandable answer."

"Albus, if I may," Luna interrupted coolly as Hermione looked ready to protest yet again.

Dumbledore calmly indicated her to continue, "I find myself a bit sceptical about your interpretation Headmaster, it is a good analysis, however, it does not truly represent every aspect of the prophecy."

Hermione smiled triumphantly as she sat down and gestured a grand opening with her arms, as if it were the greatest point ever.

Dumbledore crossed his arms a little defensively as he retorted, "The prophecy speaks of a time for love, a time for war, and a Reprieve from bloodlust. What better way to symbolize that than through the act of love-making and the purity that conceives a child? The good is with the daughter, prophecy shines, opportunity arrives, is a clear signal that a girl is destined to be born to end this madness and give Harry the strength he needs to win. The time of love is now as Miss Granger and Mr. Potter must be together immediately for their daughter of the Light and Love. It is ever-present and clear."

Luna regarded him with a cool gaze but did not respond.

Hermione's eyes widened a fraction, her mouth opened, then closed and then she stood up instantly as if lightning struck her, "Professor, you conveniently forgot one line The chalice's drink of death inaugurates the winner. That line makes it clear that a child of all things is not expected to take birth for the sake of a war. It makes no sense in relation to your argument."

Dumbledore looked ready to defend himself in his all-too-patronizing way again when Luna began chanting what seemed to be a nursery rhyme, though it was unlike any Hermione had ever heard before, definitely a wizarding one.

"Come my child, don't sit around,

Be wary of wrong, be wary of frowns,

I will always be here to protect you see,

Whenever in doubt call for MUM-MY!

But then there's the time when you are alone,

Be wary of wrong, be wary of frowns,

Big Mummy is watching don't you see?

Drink up now and make her happy!"

Hermione just looked at Luna in shock and for once, so did Dumbledore. What Hermione did not realize is that Dumbledore's reason for shock was very different from her own cause of incredulity.

"That's a lovely little song Luna, definitely a keeper and perhaps you might want to sing it to your children someday..." Hermione said uncertainly, then clapped her hands in a topic-ending manner and changed the subject tactlessly, "Getting back to the prophecy, Professor you said that—"

"Very astute Miss Lovegood." Dumbledore said, his eyes twinkling with renewed vigour.

Hermione looked from one to the other in puzzlement, "Will someone please fill in the gaps for me here. What has the nursery rhyme got to do with anything?"

Dumbledore smiled broadly, "The song Miss Lovegood just sang is a very common one sung daily in wizarding households by mothers to their little children refusing to drink their milk. The song is called In the Name of Helga."

"And...?" Hermione's patience was really being tested now.

"Helga stands for Helga Hufflepuff Hermione." Luna added without missing a beat.

Hermione definitely did not expect that coming, "I see... Again, very interesting titbit, but what has that got anything to do with the 'chalice' in the prophecy?"

Dumbledore nodded emphatically as she spoke and after spending so much time with the old man, she knew it meant he was about to launch into a long lecture in his patented teacher-mode. Sometimes she wondered if he ever willingly gave up his teaching position or if he was shoved into the position of Headmaster, because he really was a good teacher.

"I assume you know of the characteristics of Helga Hufflepuff Miss Granger?"

Hermione nodded, "Helga was said to have been a kind and loving woman, but a fierce warrior of the Light nonetheless. She would defeat her opponents without shedding a tear but would cry a river at the mere pinprick for the one's she loved. An impassioned and devoted witch, Helga spent her time caring for her school and loving her family. Children were her passion and it is said that of the twenty-two magical children she cared for only three were related to her by blood. The rest were orphans that she adopted and trained." She rattled off Hogwarts: A History by sheer memory.

Dumbledore smiled genially, "Excellent Ms. Granger, if we were in a school setting, you would have just won Gryffindor ten points."

Hermione smiled at the praise.

"What you may not know Hermione is a common wizarding practice that has developed over the years. Helga was such a devout mother and lover of all children that she is often referred to as the 'Big Mother' that oversees the safety of all children, hence the rhyme." Luna added in a monotone.

"However, what is not known and is exclusively hidden in the Hogwarts archives is the exact history of Helga Hufflepuff, which I had the pleasure of gaining access to after I became Headmaster," he raised his hand to stop Hermione from speaking, "I am sorry Miss Granger, but only Headmasters and Headmistresses of Hogwarts are permitted entry into the Archives. Despite how much ever you wish to, I cannot allow you to enter there. Now, Madame Hufflepuff was a powerful witch who fought for the Light, but what is not very well known is that she was indeed a Dark Witch. In no way evil, she simply had a keen knowledge on let us say, the less savoury aspects of magic. Well, legend has it that Madame Hufflepuff created a cup, a chalice if you please, that was enchanted to give a source of magical energy to its drinker in a time of need. If the chalice deems the drinker as worthy that is. The power of the chalice comes at a heavy price however, depending on the necessity of power, it exacts an equivalent return. Such is the nature of Dark Magic."

Hermione sat down heavily, "Well now that makes a lot more sense than a damned baby at least." She said absent-mindedly.

Dumbledore bristled uncomfortably, "Well, I have you know I thought about that theory long and hard."

Hermione was about to apologize for her comment when Luna spoke up in her usual singsong cheer, "Oh come off it Albus, you only wished to have more children in the castle."

Hermione looked at Luna with surprise and Dumbledore accompanied her in doing so, this was followed by a loud guffaw, which was eventually followed by Hermione.

When the aged Headmaster and the Brightest Witch of the New Generation calmed down enough, Luna spoke up, "Now all we have to do is figure out how the cup works."

Hermione spoke up, "We already have it?"

Dumbledore nodded, "The cup Miss Granger was one of Voldemort's horcruxes, it was destroyed by the goblins."

Hermione looked on sullenly, "But how can we use it if its destroyed?"

Luna tutted with irritation, "Come now Hermione, do you honestly think that an ancient relic of the Founders would be destroyed so easily? The soul fragment held within was removed and the object was restored to its former glory."

Hermione's eyes widened and she nodded.

A small silence followed as they were all occupied in their own respective thoughts.

Soon Hermione spoke up, "I think its time we left the Chamber."

Dumbledore reacted first, "Miss Granger, I concede that managing to complete your NEWTs in one year in ten subjects is extraordinary and gaining 9 Outstanding's and an Exceeds Expectations is legendary. But we cannot gloss over Auror training. As Miss Lovegood and I have shown you, it is less of theory and more of practice. We have two more years, then we shall return."

Hermione sighed when he finished speaking, "I'm aware Professor, however, and do not ask me why because I have no idea why, I have a feeling something wicked is coming our way, we must leave here before its too late, or we may enter a Wizarding World plunged in anarchy."

Dumbledore pursed his lips in silent contemplation as he mulled over her words.

"Since when did your belief in Divination solidify?" Luna asked absent-mindedly.

Hermione didn't even bother to look at her as she answered, "Divination is woolly, beyond a shadow of a doubt. But seeing Harry and now my own life being dictated by prophecy has forced me to reconsider my opinion."

Dumbledore looked on his new student with sadness, whether she said it or not, he knew she wasn't expecting to survive the war. He could only hope that the chalice would demand something but still leave her alive, in order to give Harry the power he knows not. Dumbledore silently massaged his aging temples, trying to dissipate the awry thoughts. When did things become so complicated anyway?

"We shall leave at the end of the fourth year." Luna said decisively.

And just like that, their time was restricted and numbered. Hermione nodded her assent carefully; this was all going to work out no matter what.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Hufflepuff Girls' Guest Dormitories

Day 3

Susan Bones lay comfortably in her bed. She felt serene and satisfied and she hadn't felt so in a long, long time. Despite all odds, her dearest and most desperate beliefs had come true. Blaise was in love with her, he was willing to die for her, in fact, he almost even did.

Susan shuddered involuntarily thinking of how bad things would have become had she not risen from her place and demanded an explanation. At the time, she wasn't even thinking and on reflecting on the situation, she knew it was rash and silly, a Gryffindor would have been proud.

Susan shook her head, dispelling her errant thoughts. After coming out of the Time Chamber, Susan had been hopeful and determined. She was convinced that everything would be perfect for her no matter what, as she was trained and prepared to fight for her world, to fight for the Light. More than anything else, she had Blaise by her side to keep her grounded. He was her rock of support, her base, her... life. When everything had fallen apart and things were virtually out of her control, it took everything in her not to crumble.

She turned in her bed and looked at the sleeping form of her tanned-skinned lover. All this time away, he had not forgotten about the

amorous pleasures of lovemaking. He had not forgotten a single spot, or nook or cranny on her body and the effect it had on her when he touched it. He loved her in a deep, passionate and caressing way that she could never fully fathom. The way he had kissed every part of her the previous night, the way he had worshipped every inch of her flesh, lovingly tracing every curve with reverence, it brought Susan to tears. How could she ever have doubted, even for a second, the almighty and all-consuming love that this man held for her?

His breathing suddenly hitched and he began trembling violently in his sleep. Susan's attention immediately snapped completely to him and her errant thoughts dissipated. She bolted up in bed and looked at him with wide eyes, unsure of what to do to best end his impromptu fit. She glanced to the bedside table where her wand was placed, but even if she used it, what healing spell could she use?

She shook her head and forced herself to think harder as his trembling worsened. He was shaking all over the bed now, nearly knocking Susan off as he grasped the sheets tightly, his body tense, nerves pulsing cleanly under his all too thin frame. The muscles in his chest contracting completely.

Susan sat immobile, shocked, uncomprehending on the best course of action. Who could help her? What was happening? BLAISE!

He was now thrashing on the mattress with wild abandon, his throes of pain searing her heart with every mismatched turn, every ragged breath.

BLAISE! BLAISE! BLAISE!

She didn't even realize when she started yelling his name.

No effect.

She threw herself onto his prone form, covering his shaking, toned chest with her own bare one. She wrapped her arms tightly around his neck and pushed her head snugly under his shaking chin. He smashed and shook and almost threw her off in his mad daze, but Susan held on. She did not come this far to let go now.

After a long time of shaking, his shudders began to relax and he settled down. A sheen of sweat covered the two of them but he was still asleep, his face drawn in a deep frown. Susan shakily rose from his chest, coated in his sweat, as she gently brushed her lips across his forehead. Instantly, his frown vanished and a look of deep contentment came upon him. Susan sighed in relief and then started wondering what had happened.

She tried to move away, but as soon as her weight lifted, Blaise let out a pitiful whimper and began mumbling under his breath.

Susan lowered herself but strained to hear his words, she soon made them out and they brought tears to her eyes, "My Susan, my Susan, my Susan..." he chanted over and over again.

Without Susan's conscious realization, Blaise's tired arms encircled her lazily and then slowly trapped her to his chest. Within a few minutes, she was locked on top of him and he had no intention to let her get away. As far as Susan was concerned, she much preferred things that way.

WHOOSH!

Susan was now lying flat on her back, with Blaise pushing himself on top of her. It was not stifling, even in his sleep he couldn't harm her, it was protective, it was possessive.

Susan pulled him closer towards her and he buried his head in her hair, her face against his shoulder.

He never stopped chanting, the volume of his voice constant throughout, "My Susan, my Susan, my Susan..."

Susan closed her eyes and let herself be pulled closer, "Yours, all yours..."

He let out a feral growl as he pushed himself between her legs, thrusting like never before.

"Mine..." His voice rose, his dreamlike state disappearing as he slowly came to reality.

Susan wrapped her legs around his torso as she pulled herself upwards, pushed him deeper within her.

"Yours..."

Blaise looked at her with deep, meaningful eyes, confusion etched across his features.

"Susan...?" He asked uncertainly, not realizing how he ended up in his current position.

Susan looked at him with a deadly mixture of love and lust, he could recognize that look anywhere.

"I'm yours..." She said simply as she pulled herself upwards and Blaise hissed in pleasure.

He looked at her lustfully, he wanted to take her, but his thoughts were not gentle, he was not being gentle.

"Claim me..." She half-whispered.

Blaise made an animalistic growl as all rational thought evaded his mind.

"Mine..." He grunted as he plunged himself within her pleasuring depths and fucked her with wild abandon.

As Susan felt herself tense, she realized one thing: Blaise had been through a lot in his time away, probably more than even she had. She would do anything for him to be able to be happy again.

Whatever it takes...

"YOURS!" She screamed as release swept through her.

"MINE!" He yelled as he let go within her.

They collapsed in a heap of limbs, breathing deeply and raggedly, each watching the other for a sign of... anything.

Blaise slid up to her and claimed her lips with his own, "I love you."

Susan smiled dazedly, basking in her afterglow, "I love you too."

Blaise snuggled up to her and she simply melted in the face of his body heat.

A comfortable silence pulled the two of them in each other's arms. An observer would think that to was their last day together instead of their first. But they didn't care, they both needed it, the reassurance, the love.

"Susan?" Blaise whispered as Susan played with his long, slender fingers.

"Hmm?" She answered absent-mindedly.

He sat up a little forcing her up with him, much to her chagrin, she placed a hand on the side of his chiselled face and stroked calmly.

"Marry me?"

She stopped abruptly, looking at his face for a hint of amusement or merriment, some sign of a joke, all she found was sincerity and conviction.

"Blaise—"

"Marry me."

She looked at him with uncertainty, his mind was set. His expression, a combination of love, devotion, determination and defiance, his mind was definitely set.

"Yes." She answered quietly.

"Now."

Susan looked at him oddly, "Now?"

He nodded emphatically, "Now."

Susan looked nonplussed, she was naked in bed, her hair a mess, her eyes puffy with recent tears, her cheeks flushed.

"But I need something old, new, borrowed and blue for luck." She whined, being the first thing that came to her mind.

"The fact we're together right now, is all the luck we need." He said honestly.

Now that was logic she could not argue with.

"I, Blaise Andres Zabini, take thee Susan Amelia as my wife with all my life, love and magic."

A shocking blue string extended from Blaise and latched onto Susan, connecting the two by a tremulous thread.

Susan looked at him with no little amount of shock, she hadn't been expecting this.

"I Susan Amelia Bones, take thee Blaise Andres as my husband with all my life, love and magic."

A pink string encircled the blue and connected to Blaise, who was smiling widely.

Slowly, Blaise beckoned his head forward and tilted to the side and Susan pushed her head ahead and claimed his lips. With a kiss, a white light sealed the two strings together and fused the couple in binding marriage.

"I love you Mrs. Zabini." He said when their lips parted.

"And I love you Mr. Zabini."

The two fell back in bed, giddy from their recent adventure. They had just gotten married! And neither was surprised with the lack of second thoughts.

Susan smiled as she looked at her boyfriend, now husband, she was too happy for words.

Whatever it takes...

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Hogwarts Lake

Day 4

Draco No-Name sat with his back lying heavily on the tree-trunk he had come to love in the past few months. This spot was extremely important to him, it was in this place that he had first kissed Luna. A small, wistful smile spread across his face in memory of her, her shiny blonde hair, her ocean blue eyes, her merry, tinkering laugh, her strange ideas. It was all so serene, so fairytale-like.

Like all fairytales it had to end too.

She had to be picked to be the General for this war; Fawkes had to have chosen her over everyone else. It was possibly the best decision that overgrown chicken had ever made, it was also possibly the biggest, most devastating blow Draco had had to endure.

He would never forget that day when she told him, they couldn't be together anymore.

"We need to talk my love."

Draco looked at Luna fondly and smiled, "About what Madame General?"

"Voldemort aims to kill the Crumple-horned Snorkacks before I find them! He must be stopped! I cannot love you and save the snorkacks at the same time. They come before me Draco, my love, you understand?"

"Hello Draco."

Draco's head snapped up, no matter how many times he tried to forget that beautiful, bell-like voice, he could never succeed in doing so.

"Luna?"

There she stood, her beauty overshadowing that of the setting sun in all its glory behind her. A small smile playing across her face.

"Hermione insisted we leave earlier, she felt evil was asunder. I find myself agreeing with her assessment. The Castle informs me that the Nargles are infesting your mind and slowly taking over your jaunty and slightly facetious spirit. Tell me Draco, is the castle right?"

Draco jaw dropped at her greeting and manner of inquiry. He wanted to shout and scream and tell her he was not alright, tell her he hasn't been alright since the day she left him, tell her how much his spirit was bursting with envy now that Blaise and Susan were married and how dearly he wished to be in their place, tell her how much he wanted it to be his mother berating him right now instead of Amelia berating Susan. There were a lot of things he wanted to tell her, but right now he only could react in one way.

He threw his head back and laughed.

By the time he regained his wits and looked at her, she was sitting cross-legged in front of him and looked at him intently.

"They really have taken over you haven't they?" She said with a hint of sadness.

Draco's expression turned wistful, "Every since you left my darling, ever since you left..."

A tear formed in her eyes and then she openly began to cry. Sobs racked her body as Draco went into action and held onto her with all his might.

"Shhh... Its okay Luna. I love you. I always have and always will. I love you..." he said in a calm reassuring voice.

She pulled her head back once the tears subsided, "I never chose this."

"I know." He whispered.

"I never wanted it to be like this." She persisted.

"I know." He said trying to hold back his own tears.

"I wanted us to be in Susan's and Blaise's places right now." She murmured.

"I know." He said clamping his eyes shut left his will-power abandon him at the most inopportune of moments.

Once he felt himself regain composure, he opened his eyes and looked at Luna intently, "I still love you my darling."

She looked at and nodded, "Yes you do." She said without a hint of humour or modesty.

Draco couldn't help but smile at this; this was the Luna he loved.

"Kiss me." She silently commanded.

"With pleasure."

He lowered his head to hers and enjoyed for the first time in months what he had been denied for so long. What started out slow and calm, turned into a needy, urgent kiss as a dying man finding the light at his doorstep.

They pulled apart and Draco held her to himself, strongly, protectively, stroking her hair with love.

"Its time my love."

Draco sighed, he knew his reprieve wouldn't last forever.

"Let's go."

They stood up and walked back to the castle hand-in-hand. Just before they entered, Luna let go of his hand and they slipped back into their roles: General and Soldier.

Little Hangleton – Riddle Manor

Throne Room

Day 4

Peter Pettigrew was a small, unassuming man. No one had ever paid him much attention because there was no reason to. He looked like a rat, he was short, and his face was drawn in a constant

expression of fear. No one, however, would ever realize what a big mistake they had made with their ignorance. Peter Pettigrew deserved his animagus form to the last letter, he truly imbibed all the qualities of it, he was a rat.

He walked cautiously up to his master, the man who had been responsible for every decision he had made in his adult life. That man was now reduced again to a snivelling, disgusting infant in his arms. This man, was expecting him to make another sacrifice, to bring him back... again.

Peter Pettigrew was a rat, but he was not stupid.

"Wormtail..." Hissed the bundle angrily and Peter flinched unwillingly.

"Yes... yes Milord?" he stuttered.

"How are the numbers?" Came a tired question.

"The ranks are still swelling with new recruits. However, morale is at an all-time low with your recent fall in the Battle of Diagon Alley. The Light is basking in its victory, although they are not going any easier on us. They are systematically rounding up any and all Death Eaters. The Ministry building was reclaimed without a fight and they are purging their own numbers of all our leaks. It does not look well Milord..." Peter went off quickly, trying his level best to hide his tremour at what he was about to do.

The bundle sighed in exasperation, "Those fools! Trust them to not last a minute without my guidance..."

Peter nodded quickly, "Milord we are lost without you." Peter wanted nothing more than to wring the baby in his arms, the baby that had once been a powerful Dark Lord that had enticed him with power beyond his wildest dreams. Power which had convinced him to betray his best friends, power which had made him attack the boy who was supposed to be his own surrogate nephew. He had received no power, only a life of a marked man and deep sadness and loneliness. This wretched... thing... had caused it all.

Peter had no more hopes for himself, he knew that even if he killed the Dark Lord, he would never be reaccepted into his old world,

there was no one there waiting for him with open arms, he had severed all his ties himself, only to regret it all.

"How are my other ranks Wormtail?" The Dark Lord asked interrupting his self-reflection.

"The Vampires, as Milord predicted, have chosen neutrality in the war like they did before. The Werewolves have unanimously chosen the Dark, Fenrir Greyback stands ready with his army. Three of five giant covens have pledged allegiance to the Dark Lord, the remaining two choosing neutrality. Dementors have always been your side Milord and the Death Eaters number between 55-60, though the losses of the Dark's best Generals is a disheartening aspect." Wormtail said quietly.

"Filthy vampires, creatures of the dark will pay for their disobedience when Hogwarts falls. The other animals will be rewarded with their lives. Time is of the essence Wormtail." The bundle hissed.

Peter nodded sycophantically as he led the bundle to the centre of the room. He carefully placed the bundle within the depths of the empty cauldron.

"Bring Nagini here Wormtail." It ordered.

Peter shivered as he moved, but before taking any steps whatsoever, he felt the snake coil around his feet. Peter shuddered and yelped in surprise, but it only served to make the snake tie itself around him tighter.

"Nagini... Pour your blood into the cauldron my sssweet." He hissed in Parseltongue and Peter just stared with abject fear on his face.

Nagini slowly drained herself into the cauldron and Voldemort made another hissing sound and she stopped.

"Wormtail..." Voldemort said tiredly.

"Mi...Milord?" He whispered in little relief as he felt Nagini uncoil and slither away.

"I need your flesh servant." He hissed impatiently.

Despite his situation, Peter allowed a small smile to play across his lips, this was his opportunity.

"Of course milord, I have just the hand for the task."

Peter raised his silvery-wand hand and pointed it at the baby-thing.

Voldemort laughed, a high-pitched, amused, dark laugh, "Ah Wormtail, it seems you have a backbone after all."

At that moment, Peter felt more afraid than ever before in his entire life, if the Dark Lord was laughing at his attempts, then there was no way for him to succeed.

But he had not come this far to back out in the end.

"Avada Kedav—"

His spell was cut short as his hand, his silver hand reacted violently and twisted completely to point his own wand at him.

Peter looked on in horror, his mouth stopped in mid spell.

"You actually thought you could survive fool!" Voldemort said menacingly, "You die today Wormtail, for your impudence and treachery."

The silver hand turned razor sharp and cut Peter's other hand in one fell swoop. Peter for his part just looked on in pure terror. An agonized scream left his lips as he felt his flesh tear and second and only hand fall into the cauldron holding the monster.

The silver hand then turn to Peter's neck and clasped itself onto it, slowly choking him.

A string of words in Latin emanated from the cauldron as the Dark Lord chanted for the recreation of his body.

Peter struggled and begged and pleaded for the pain to end, he mindlessly clawed with his stub hand the silver death-trap clasped around his neck. There was nothing he could do, he was going to die.

The string of chanting ended abruptly as the cauldron holding Voldemort burned inwards and turned into a swirling mass of black.

As Peter's last ragged breaths escaped him, he realized that he was going to die, as he closed his eyes he saw the faces of Lily Evans and James Potter, the two friends he had sacrificed for the sake of his own life. Both were proud and upstanding members of the Magical Community. Both dead far too young, all because of him.

The image changed and he saw a large werewolf accompanied by the Grim stalking towards him. If Peter hadn't already been dying he would have been scared, but these last moments of delirium didn't bother him the least.

The hand pressed into his throat and his windpipe finally succumbed to it, his body went limp, his struggles for survival ended. The last vision he saw, was of a giant werewolf and Grim angrily tear him apart and eat up his flesh, before wrathfully spitting it out, then... he saw no more.

The Mooner and Grim will eat the Rat

As the black mist subsided, Voldemort stood proud and strong in his throne room. He looked around with a sense of achievement and experimentally flexed his new body, significantly stronger and better due to his choice of using Nagini's blood.

He looked at the dead form of his previous servant and a cruel smile spread across his lips. The rat finally got what he deserved.

Voldemort cackled and then snapped his head forward, he walked out of the room, with every intention to rally up his followers, the time for attacking Hogwarts had arrived, victory would be the only option.

A cruel smile twisted across Voldemort's face as he sent a message to his long time nemesis.

"Hello Harry, I'm back and your mudblood will not save you this time."

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Great Hall at Dinner Time

Day 4

Harry fell down from his seat at the Gryffindor table, his hand pressed against the scar that had started all of this. The sheer pain he felt was legendary in its own might.

Hello Harry, I'm back and your mudblood will not save you this time.

Everywhere the calm and happy chatter had quickly subsided. Amelia Bones was no longer berating Susan who seemed to not be smiling anymore with a wistful expression on her face.

Every face in the Hall had turned to stare at him with no small amount of fear and dread.

Harry picked himself from the floor, his jaw set with determination as he eyed each every person in the Great Hall, young and old.

"He's back."

Silence.

A flurry of loud footsteps and slightly petite frame crashed into his. The only warning Harry had was a mane of bushy brown hair that refused to part from him.

Strawberries...

Hermione!

"Hermione!" He exclaimed out loud.

She pulled back and looked at him with shining eyes, the fierce determination he saw sparkling in them was enough to set his heart on fire with a passion greater than he had ever felt before. How could he ever doubt her love? It was plain as day in those eyes of hers.

"I'm here Harry, we all are."

She crashed her lips onto his and they shared a fiery reunion.

Harry felt his hopes lift, he was going to survive this, they were going to survive this, no matter what.

This will be a Battle for the Ages.

Drop a REVIEW!

You-hoo! Me again! Tell me you loved it through a review! At this point if you hated it, I couldn't care less, I'm going to finish this fic even if no one likes it, because I just have to see it through at this point.

2 chapters to go!

Next Chapter: Judgement Day - The Final Battle

Loving you always,

~ Gatonio

Chapter 15 – Judgement Day

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Headmaster's Office

12:00 AM

"No I do not understand what all this is for Professor! We do not have the time for prophecy analyses, my friends are out there, risking their lives, I should be joining them and so should you, this conversation is moot!" Harry said frustrated.

Dumbledore smiled gently, "Harry, my boy, this conversation could perhaps help decide the outcome of this war."

Ragnok, sitting in a corner, "What you are suggesting Mr. Dumbledore is beyond the scope of reality. To assume a mere cup could make such a difference, it is preposterous."

"Yet here we stand, allowing a barely trained 17-year-old fight one of the worst Dark Lords of our time, at a time of crisis." Luna added quietly from behind.

Harry was livid by her comment but Ragnok looked thoughtful and even chuckled in a Goblin-y way.

"Well said General." He said appreciatively.

Harry ran a hand through his head in exasperation, "Well said! WELL SAID! Look, we do not have time or energy to waste on these silly discussions, the war is starting at any time now, I NEED to be out there FIGHTING!"

"Harry..." Hermione finally spoke up from a little to the side, "You NEED to be calming down and understanding the situation at hand. I have an equal role to play in this war and as much as seeing our friends die out there will be painful for me, I will still do what needs to be done."

Harry sighed and sat back down, "Lets hurry and get this over with, I won't be able to live with myself if something happened to someone I care about because I wasted my time arguing."

Hermione gave him a small smile and walked forward towards the Headmaster's desk as she pulled up the cup.

She rotated it in her hand wonderingly and thought now what?

The cup was just as unresponsive as ever. She levelled Dumbledore with a steady gaze and questioned him with her eyes. He simply stared right back and shook his head in worry.

"There is no spell or enchantment that I can help you with Ms. Granger. The cup is an ancient relic that will activate on its own accord. What I will suggest is that we break from this room and head to our battle positions. When the cup senses the time of the choice has arrived, it will make its presence known." He was resigned and so was Hermione.

She nodded resolutely and turned to face her beloved who looked at her equally determinedly. His jaw was set and his eyes hard, she had never seen him in battle before, but now she knew why everyone feared him and considered him a worthy General.

He walked forward and embraced her in his arms, "We will walk out of this war alive Hermione, no matter what."

She rested her head on his shoulder and inhaled his scent, trying to etch it into her memory, "We will always be together Harry," whether alive or not.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Astronomy Tower

12:00 AM

Draco No-Name surveyed the scene below him with interest. He was leading an aerial assault on the oncoming enemies. Up until now, there was no one, all the warriors of Hogwarts were standing prepared, rearing for the oncoming assault.

Draco turned around and looked at his team, some older Aurors and old Quidditch players, old classmates and some formidable fliers who came to offer their services to the Light.

"Listen up Team, we've all had our battles, whether it be fighting Death Eaters or trying to catch the snitch at Quidditch. We are all different, from different worlds and occupations. However, we all share two things in common: allegiance to the Light and a love for flying. Today, we have an opportunity to meld those two attributes. When we are up there, reign your spells with no mercy, we cannot avoid hurting some of our allies, if we get majority of our enemies in the bargain. Trust each other and your instincts and be prepared for anything. Voldemort's forces are far and wide, we have no idea what he may turn up with. Each of you today has the chance to be a hero today, take it!" Draco ended emphatically.

His team erupted in cheers.

A loud, grating sound was heard as the age-old gateway of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry was blown off its hinges. Heavy footfalls could be heard as wizards and beasts alike entered, a thirst for blood evident. What shocked Draco the most however, were the Giants, all thirty of them, full-grown giants.

He turned back to his team who were paling with fear. His expression set, his determination set in stone.

"FOR THE LIGHT!"

His team perked up and someone from the back cheered, "FOR THE LIGHT!"

The cheer picked up and team-members were shrieking at the top of their voices to try and quell their fears.

Draco turned back to the scene of the advancing army, he knew it was their responsibility to take care of the giants as they were high enough to do some damage. He also knew that many of the cheering warriors behind him would not make it back.

He mounted his broom and took off in the evening sky, ready to brave the oncoming army amid cheers and screams of 'FOR THE LIGHT'. At the back of his mind, he only had one cheer, for the woman he loved more than life itself.

While they fought for the Light, Draco fought for his love; after all, he is a Slytherin, 'FOR LUNA!'

Draco approached the first giant with incredible speed, he had been through hours of tactical defense with his co-workers on the prospect of an attack of this sort. A giant is practically invulnerable, the only probable aspect of it that could be penetrated would be through its mouth.

He swerved left narrowly avoiding a large, meaty hand trying to squat it. A deft turn left and a sharp jab downwards and he escaped further attempts at his person. This was getting difficult, Draco knew he was an able flier, but his luck and skill would run out sooner or later. Something needed to be done to deal with these giants quickly and effectively.

He turned upward to a sharp ninety degree and urged his Firebolt onwards. It was a straight up into the sky and for a moment Draco forgot that he was in a battle and the heat of the flight took over him. It was an intense feeling of liberation that Draco had forgotten. That moment Draco relished. He turned out of his steep ascent to turn straight forward and run towards the giant head on. The giant opened his mouth to make a large, raucous scream and Draco used the opportunity to fire a spell, straight on.

"Avada Kedavra!"

A flash of green light and the giant fell backwards. Draco circled the corpse with unconfined glee, he had just conquered a giant after all.

"RAAAAAAR!" An angry roar broke Draco from his reverie. He turned his head to see a massive giant, female by the likes of it, charging towards him at full speed.

In just the nick of time, Draco flew up and away, the female giant hot on his heels. He just couldn't understand what he had done to garner such unrestricted attention. As he turned and flew, he noticed Oliver Wood and Charlie Weasley take down a giant themselves and high-five through the air. Well, he could use their help.

"Oi!" He called out hoping they would hear, they did. Oliver turned to look at Draco and immediately his expression turned grim watching

Draco fly for his life against a massive and not to mention angry giant.

Oliver nudged Charlie who looked at Draco in alarm as Draco circled a school tower in a vain attempt to get the giant of his tail, though it did buy him a lead. Charlie and Oliver flew to his sides, flanking him and issuing orders to those they passed trying to handle the giants.

But the female giant, who had worked up an even greater rage now was behind them like Satan himself.

"What did you do to her? She's flown of her handle she has!" Oliver said in fear as he ducked another large boulder she chucked at them.

"Don't know and don't care Wood, we need her down, she'll take out the entire school at this rate." Draco shot back.

Charlie looked thoughtful, "It doesn't make sense, giants are supposed to be easily distracted, as they lose sight of one target they go after another, she's latched onto you like no other. Did you kill her mate or something?"

A loud click went on in Draco's head but he still had his pride, "Fascinating Weasley, you can do your study on the nature of giants some other time," he swerved and their triumvirate broke up as they avoided yet another onslaught by the angry giant who was getting progressively closer. "Maybe we should deal with her first!" Draco shouted across to them as he ducked once again and survived by a hair's breath.

"DRACO!"

Draco looked away and saw Neville shaking his hands vigorously, he flew down to him after creating a fake image of himself flying around to distract the giant.

As soon as he was in close enough range Neville threw something at him, which he caught deftly in one hand, it was small and greenish, about double the size of the golden snitch. Draco raised an aristocratic eyebrow in question.

"Just throw it in is mouth and scream expulsio. Trust me!" Neville said urgently before turning around and running to Charlie, telling him to do the same.

Draco looked doubtful. He turned to look at the female giant who was very, very angry now and knew his choice was made, he had to stop her and he trusted Longbottom, no matter how weird that sounded.

Draco kicked off the ground as his illusion dissipated and the giant turned towards him and yelled, a loud piercing screech of rage as she charged towards him. Draco wasted no time in throwing the green ball right at her. As soon as he saw it enter her mouth he yelled, "EXPULSIO!"

The green ball exploded in her mouth, letting out noxious green fumes. The giant came to a screeching halt as she wrapped her arms around her neck and coughed and spat violently. Draco stared on in morbid fascination as the giant, so threatening and vile just a few moments ago, choked and fell in a whimpering heap. She shook for a few seconds as she was writhing on the ground, then went completely still.

Draco turned and looked at Longbottom who gave him a thumbs-up, a schadenfreudic, happy smile gracing his face. Who would've ever thought Longbottom had it in him?

Draco shook his head as he flew off to help some others who seemed to be having trouble dealing with the giants; his only hope was that they would be able to get rid of them before the reinforcements came in. If giants were just the beginning, Draco shuddered to think what would come next.

As he flew towards Katie Bell who was flying helter-skelter avoiding a menacing giant he only felt a deep fear settle in his heart, something was wrong with Luna. She shook it off, hoping that she would be able to handle it; she had to.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Greenhouses near Forbidden Forest

01:00 AM

Neville Longbottom had been called a number of names in his lifetime: near-squib, coward, incapable, bumbling, the list was endless. Despite all beliefs to the contrary, Neville managed to prove his mettle, he proved that with his mastery of the element of Earth, he could be a formidable warrior. He became the ideal Gryffindor with the weapons, the will, the courage and the girl. So when he saw Draco, his lifelong bully, takedown a full-grown, angry mountain giant with a device of his invention, he felt his chest swell with pride.

Neville turned his head from side-to-side watching the progression of the fliers as they tackled giant after giant. Truth be told, he was impressed as they were making considerable headway in dealing with the preliminary forces. Neville had a large grin etched across his face as he saw Draco help Katie Bell takedown another giant.

BEAT!

Neville's hand flew to his chest, his heart beating erratically. Since his discovery of his Earth Elemental abilities, Neville had come to regard his instincts with a renewed interest.

BEAT!

His heartbeat accelerated and he allowed his instincts to guide him. He turned towards the Forest and to his utter astonishment; he heard the forest speak to him. It was a novel experience, one he had never felt before and doubted anyone else had either. He always knew the forest was a living entity, but it had a consciousness that was so much larger and so much greater than wizards and it never bothered with speaking or pleasantries. Now the Forest was calling him, speaking to him and he knew that something wicked was coming his way.

Neville blocked out all the scenes in front of him, he completely disconnected himself from his present and allowed the voice of the Forest to guide him, engulf him, show him.

BEAT!

Men, fast men, running, approaching, red eyes, bloodlust, sharp canines, animals.

Neville opened his eyes in horror, he knew what was coming. He turned towards his comrades, they were a scant nine, all being Herbologists from different walks of the subject. In all their battle plans, they had never taken into consideration the fact that Voldemort's forces could penetrate the Forbidden Forest. They had few men on that side of the castle, mostly researchers and suppliers to keep the attackers upfront thoroughly supplied at all times. Now Neville knew their role had been elevated indefinitely.

He pointed his wand to his throat, "Sonorous! TEAM TERRA! TEAM TERRA! PREPARE FOR ASSAULT!"

Despite himself, Neville gulped involuntarily thinking of their upcoming attackers, he summoned all of his Gryffindor courage and spoke to the assembling team, all looking surprised and scared, "WEREWOLVES!"

"What do you mean Werewolves Longbottom?" Came a female voice from the side, Helga Bloomhardy, a notable herbologist of the twentieth century, "We are herbologists, researchers, not warriors. We have our plants and strategies, but that is where our expertise ends, not all of us are Aurors like you."

Neville looked at her straight in the eye. By age, he was fifteen in appearance and she was... a woman of age. But at that moment, none of that held relevance.

"We are herbologists and our expertise is our plants. They are weres, children of the moon; they derive their strength from hiding in the shadows. We pull ours from sunlight. I am sending a message for back-up but battle along the front-line is to begin momentarily and we do not have enough time to take cover and allow the Weres to attack us from behind, we are all the Light has for now and we will fight!"

Bloomhardy regarded him shrewdly and slowly nodded her head, the others following suit.

"How many are we facing?" A voice came.

"The Forest pointed out twenty, but I assume there may be more."

Shocked gasps.

Bloomhardy screamed out, "Well what are you all waiting for? Terra Plan A and B are in full practice as of now. Gather the plants! Longbottom—"

"On it!" Neville responded.

He closed his eyes as his team dispersed to prepare everything for battle. Speaking to nature is not something Neville had to learn, it's something he could always do; he just never consciously realized it. At that moment, he was pushing with every last fibre in his being to convince the Forest to cooperate with him. He begged and pleaded and even formed words, sent multitudes of emotions and images and hoped, prayed that the Forest would respond instead of returning to its nonchalant stupor.

A soft breeze picked up and the leaves eerily rustled. Neville opened his eyes and smiled, the Forest had agreed to help.

Neville ran back to help his team but at the same time, he was assaulted with images from the Forest of what it was doing to the surprise ambushers. As Neville sprouted the seeds of his QuickGrow Devil's Snare at the border line of the Forest, he saw the trees converging on a Were and knocking him out, the roots then pulling onto him and dragging him under. Half a dozen Weres were being eliminated in this process and the Forest was confusing the main pack while reducing its numbers, forcing them to run in circles as Neville prepared their battlefield.

"I found it!" Came a raspy voice from a few trees beyond.

Neville snapped his head up as he heard the voice; the Weres had arrived. He sensed the distress of the Forest at not being able to rid all of them, but he sent waves of calm, thanking Nature for its bountiful help. Soon after, the Forest was silent again.

Twenty to twenty-five Weres came bounding forward as Neville took a few steps back, the remaining eight members of Team Terra hidden and ready for surprised assaults.

The Weres menacingly converged towards Neville while Neville dutifully played the role of the surprised, caught-off-guard, run-off-

the-mill Herbologist. As the Weres sneered and approached, stalking him, he carefully observed their stances. Once all of them were out of the forest and had gone clearly beyond the boundary line, he raised his wand and yelled, "Engorgio!"

At once, all the planted Devil's Snare sprouted out from the ground in an oval shape and surrounded the dumbstruck Weres. Neville smirked seeing their predicament and he urged the Snare to act up and respond.

Neville backed up a few more spaces and then raised his hands as the indication as two large shutters were opened and a horde of Cornish Doxies were unleashed on the trapped Weres.

The Weres attacked the Doxies wildly as they were repeatedly stung and bitten while simultaneously avoiding the encroaching Devil's Snare.

Neville thought that the battle was in the bag and distantly he saw Draco fast approaching, seeing as they really needed help. Behind Draco, a group of back-up Aurors and warriors alike making their way as well.

A large burst of fire tore through the Snare and burnt the Doxies. Of the score of the Weres originally trapped barely twelve survived intact, the rest being incapacitated or killed. Neville immediately recognized the Were leading the pack and holding the wand as Fenrir Greyback, the fiercest and worst of them all. If only Neville could hold them off for a few more minutes, but he knew that stalling would be futile against a dozen angry Weres charged for battle.

Neville sighed, he had wanted to avoid using his secret weapon but saw no other option. He raised his wand towards Greenhouse Three and his team members got the plants ready.

"Accio Madragoras!"

In a flash, an entire stash of potted mandrakes flew towards Neville and he placed them strategically in front of him in a battle-line. The Mandrakes looked agitated but at the sight of Neville, they immediately calmed down.

The Weres paused momentarily but Fenrir looked at the plants curiously for a few seconds and broke out laughing, "Is that all you have kid? Ugly plants."

Neville's eye twitched in anger but he held his composure, he just hated it when people insulted his babies, yes he considered them his babies, he grew them from scratch after all.

"Alright Mandrakes," he said loudly and clearly, knowing full-well his Mandrakes understood him, "Scream for me!"

Neville at once raised a soundless shield to block off the Greenhouses with his team members and himself from the impact of the Mandrakes yells. They say the screams of one fully-grown Mandrake is fatal, but that of eight simultaneously was unheard of.

No time like the present to find out, Neville thought.

Although Neville couldn't hear it, he saw the effects of their yells on the unsuspecting Weres who doubled over in pain as soon as they started yelling. Their hands flew to their ears and within seconds their ears were bleeding, Neville chuckled darkly as their hypersensitive hearing proved to be their undoing in this scenario. He saw cruelly as all the Weres stumbled and fell and writhed on the ground. He would have let them continue had he not felt Draco's steady hand on his shoulder.

"They've suffered enough Nev, we'll handle it from here."

Neville looked around in shock and saw all the assembled Aurors and his teammates regard him with some trepidation, he had shown no remorse whatsoever and was slightly alarmed by his own heartlessness.

He sent a few calm waves and the mandrakes calmed down and fell asleep. With a swish of their wands, they dropped the silencing barrier and the Aurors swept towards the Weres, or whatever was left of them.

"Excellently handled Longbottom, you did the Light proud!" Bloomhardy said with a nod of her head.

Neville responded with a curt nod himself and was about to say something to Draco when his hand flew to his chest.

BEAT!

DAPHNE!

Without another word, Neville grabbed Draco's broom and kicked off, his fear of flight forgotten in the moment as he rushed towards where he knew Daphne was stationed and hoped to God that he wasn't too late.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Castle Gate to Hogsmeade

01:15 AM

Daphne Greengrass prided herself on her keen intellect. She always had the most cunning and surprising strategies to catch the enemy off-guard and why wouldn't she? She was a Slytherin after all.

But as she stood at the Front Gate of the Castle, being flanked on both sides by nearly two score Aurors of the Light, she was anxious and slightly excited. They had little idea of what to expect from Voldemort, but they knew that Voldemort liked to start with a bang and then turn up himself to take the glory and do minimal work. But the question was: what was he planning?

Her thoughts came to a screeching halt as a severe cold chill appeared in the air, the bright lights set up were mysteriously covered by a rapidly appearing fog and Daphne felt the life and happiness being sucked out of her very being. Her mind was attacked with a single image of Neville lying face-down on the ground, unmoving in an odd angle, no breaths being inhaled and his eyes staring fixed ahead.

Daphne's hand flew to her mouth in shock as she shook her head vigorously to dissipate the black notion of something like that actually happening to her Neville. She knew what was coming.

"DEMENTORS!" Someone yelled.

Well, no shit Sherlock, she wanted to say but couldn't due to the freezing together of her lips. The rate at which everything was freezing up implied that a large number of Dementors were headed their way.

"On the count of three, patroni!" Came the leader, Tonks' yell.

Daphne unconsciously nodded as she racked her mind for a single happy thought, but to her intense shock and misery, the single image of Neville being overcome by wounds and succumbing to his bloodloss kept invading her mind, rendering her unable to contemplate let alone create a patronus.

"They're HERE!"

Daphne was panicking now, sweat was dripping from her brow as she considered her options, it was only the intense training she underwent that convinced her to be able to think properly in such a tight situation where all she wanted was to curl up and die.

And they finally arrived. In hordes and hordes, the Dementors made their way to the prepared warriors and Daphne felt her heart get stuck in her throat.

"EXPECTO PATRONUM!" A number of voices let out simultaneously and several animals jumped forward to ward off the Dementors, Tonks' wolf leading the charge.

Think, Daphne commanded herself, think harder! Think faster!

She shakily raised her wand and screamed, "Expecto Patronum!"

A silver mist made its way from her wand but it barely morphed into anything substantial at all. Daphne cursed under her breath in anger, the cold creeping up on her and her panic rising.

She took a few steps back and gasped for some calming breaths. Time was running out.

Please don't kill me!

Daphne clutched her hands on her head and shook it erratically, trying to get away from the thoughts of Neville dying. She unconsciously began walking backwards and away from the scene, knowing she wasn't much help. Slowly, but steadily, her control with reality was slipping and she was getting lost in the world of her nightmares.

The cold spiked to an all-time high and the noises of the battle cut off. Daphne fell to the ground in an empty heap, she had nothing left within her as the dementors overrode her sense of reason. Her eyes stared fixedly ahead as the last vestiges of consciousness in her mind began evading her.

A hooded figure loomed near; it edged its way closer towards Daphne. Daphne looked around and noticed the forest, she had backed herself away from the Battle and walked into the thicket of the trees to the side, no one would see her and she would get in no one's way.

The dementor finally came and stood above her. It lowered its hood and faced downwards. Daphne saw the dementor perform the action, she felt its horrifying, chilling breath on her skin as she contemplated her fate.

If truth be told, Daphne didn't want to die, but if she did, she would still be happy.

Daphne closed her eyes and let memories consume her, memories of the time she spent happy and free.

Neville and her sitting under the tree behind the Greenhouse, his arm draped around her shoulders as she lay her head on his strong chest.

Neville and her sleeping together in the same bed for the first time. She spent most of the night looking at his calm, smooth face, free of worry and anxiety. She hesitantly touched it and then caressed it. When she tried to move away, his demeanour immediately changed and he pulled her closer fiercely. She smiled into his embrace and fell asleep.

Neville's hands running through her hair, his body pressed against hers, his lips crashed upon hers as he consumes her with his fiery passion. She is melting...

Daphne sighed as she felt the dementor near; she looked it into its mouth-face and then closed her eyes once again. A single tear trailing down her cheek as she realized how devastated Neville would be when he found out.

Neville...

She grasped her wand tightly and concentrated on a picture of him smiling.

Neville...

She shakily picked it up and pointed it to the back of the dementor's head.

Neville...

"Expecto Patronum..." she whispered.

A gigantic, shimmering tigress leaped from her wand and pounced on the dementor. The dementor flailed and tried to run away, but failed as the patronus continued to jump on and attack it.

Daphne took calm, deep breaths as her reason and consciousness returned as the dementor's effect faded. She knew her patronus wouldn't last forever, especially since all her energy was sapped.

"Neville..." She whispered into the night sky.

"DAPHNE!" Came a triumphant response.

As Daphne's eyes closed, she saw Neville racing towards her with his wand pointed towards the dementor. When oblivion finally overtook her, Neville had gathered her in his arms and begged her to stay.

She wanted to reassure him, she wanted to comfort him, she wanted to tell him that she fought to stay with him. But the truth was

that she was just so tired... so inexorably fatigued that she would tell him all these things he wanted to hear after she had a small nap.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Hospital Wing

01:30 AM

Astoria Greengrass bustled around the Hospital Wing helping Madame Pomfrey in every way she could. She had no idea how the battle was progressing, she just knew that if she started thinking about it, she would never stop and then probably have an anxiety attack. In light of this revelation, Astoria found it amenable to simply sit back and help the wounded, play her part and not worry.

Astoria sat beside a wounded flier. He was fighting against the dragons, a member of the Tornados Quidditch team. Despite being severely wounded, he was still grinning like a fool.

"Choo see 'ow I took 'er down?" He said excitedly to Astoria and Astoria could only smile tiredly.

"I'm sorry I didn't, I was busy nursing, but I am sure it was magnificent. Right now I need you to relax and let me tend to you."

"Eh, tha's fo' weaklin's, I ain't in pain. Let me go and I'll bring 'em all down!" He ended his little advertisement with a fist pumped in the air that he immediately lowered when he felt pain shoot up his arm.

Astoria giggled despite herself, "In any event, you are not fit to go out and you have already done your part. Why don't you just let me take care of you now and then we'll see about fight, alright?"

The man sighed, "If 'ou insist..."

Astoria spoke to him for a few more minutes amiably, then excused herself to tend to someone else. She was about to help another patient when the Hospital Wing windows shattered inwards and in came the last thing she ever expected to see: Neville Longbottom riding a broomstick with Daphne in his arms looking visibly pale.

"Daphne!" Astoria distantly heard herself screaming as her mind drew a complete blank.

Madame Pomfrey ran towards Neville and ranted for a few minutes about breaking the school windows.

Neville in-between pants grunted out, "Dementors...almost kissed...she fell asleep..."

That stopped the Madame and she levitated Daphne onto one of the hospital beds. She started waving her wand in complicated patterns and observing the colours that showed up after running over Daphne's body.

All at once, Astoria regained sense of her body and she ran to Neville.

"What happened!" She demanded hotly, the accusation in her tone was all too obvious.

Neville didn't even look at her; his pained eyes were solely focused on Daphne.

"She was on the frontline. She got cut off from the rest of the team and a dementor caught her off-guard. She managed to throw it off when he was about to kiss her. I can never imagine what gave her the strength to fend for herself in the position she was in. when I came the dementor was converging on her as her patronus faded and she looked unconscious. I panicked; I simply picked her up and flew away before the dementor could even realize what was happening. I don't know if... her soul..."

Astoria shook her head vigourously as his story came to a close. She refused to lose her sister, her only sister, the last remaining survivor of their family. She refused to be the only Greengrass left all because of this stupid war. Daphne had to survive.

"No." She said backing away.

"Astoria." Neville reached out towards her, his hand extending to give her comfort, looking at her the first time.

"No." Tears were now blinding her vision, the Hospital Wing was deathly silent as everyone saw Astoria breakdown.

"Listen to..." Neville began.

"NO!" She yelled and ran out of the Hospital Wing.

"Astoria!" Neville's voice trailed behind her, but she couldn't care less, her sister was going to die!

Astoria ran and ran and ran. She finally stopped when her breaths were coming in slow and laboured and she felt pain in her sides. She looked forward and saw she had run all the way to the Astronomy Tower.

She stood at the end of the Tower overlooking the noisy night-sky. There were still several fliers in the air, handling the last remaining giants. She saw Draco's blond hair stand out among them all. He was still fighting.

Her thoughts moved towards Draco and the misery that his life was. If he could live despite being rejected by Luna due to the war and still fight to the bitter end, why was she being weak? Daphne would survive; she had to, because Astoria was waiting for her.

Draco had lost everything he held near and dear to himself; his father was abusive, his mother was kept in constant reclusion so that she could recover from the shock that her horrid life had been for the past 16 years. Draco had done everything he possible could to help her and that involved staying away from her when he needed her most because his face reminded her of Lucius and she immediately shut down. Draco willingly sacrificed his mother for her betterment. He had Luna to comfort him and then he lost her too for the sake of the war. They both knew that being Generals in this war as they were, the likelihood of one of them dying was great, and yet there they stood fighting for their cause, their beliefs and their people. Draco has always had the shorter end of the stick and still he stood tall, strong and proud. Why couldn't she?

Astoria smiled through her still-falling tears as she retraced her steps and walked back calmly to the Hospital Wing, trying to compose herself.

As she made her beside Daphne, she held onto Daphne's clammy hand and squeezed tight.

"As I was telling Mr. Longbottom, Ms. Greengrass; Ms. Greengrass has suffered minimum if any damage by the dementor, however there will still be some effects. Hopefully, she will make a full recovery, but if she doesn't then she will face some moments of pain and oblivion as she momentarily loses herself, but nothing extremely serious."

Astoria let go of a breath she had no idea she was holding and turned into Daphne, holding her sister tight against herself.

This war will end, the Light will win and they all will survive.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Castle Outer Grounds

02:00 AM

"Run them back and then forth, get Team Beta to fend off the rear end!" Susan screamed at a subordinate as she fired another cutting hex to an opponent she was fighting.

The Death Eaters had finally made an appearance expecting the Grounds to be left with survivors not warriors, they hadn't realized that the giants and dementors had been subdued effectively with minimal damage to the Castle or their ranks.

However as soon as the Death Eaters made an appearance, the rapid advantage of the Light was being lost and the War was being dragged into attrition. They were losing valuable witches and wizards on both sides and nothing could be done about it, unless the Death Eaters backed off.

"Avada Kedavra!"

Susan ducked as the green curse sailed over her head; she narrowed her eyes towards the general direction of the attacker and finally saw his silhouetted form behind some bushes.

Susan turned to her current opponent and fired a blasting hex that hit him square in the chest; he fell to the ground dead.

Susan turned and aimed her wand discretely, "Accio Death Eater!"

The Death Eater came tumbling out from the bushes and fell at Susan's feet.

She looked into his eyes and her eyes immediately narrowed, Rookwood: the man responsible for killing her parents.

"Get up!" She barked and he shakily rose to his feet and pointed his wand towards her.

"Let's see what you've got Rookwood." She spat at him.

He smiled menacingly as he turned in a graceful sweep and fired several blasting hexes.

Susan jumped from their path and fired off a stunner of her own. He easily raised a shield and deflected it.

Susan turned on her heel and started shooting spell after spell, any and every one that came to her mind she gave to him. Some were spoken, others silent and she topped it all off with a tripping jinx.

Rookwood certainly was a master of his game; he raised a shield that blocked it all and dove to the side when his shield failed. That was the opening Susan was looking for. With a definitive sweep of her wand, she transfigured all the fallen debris on the ground into knives and levitated them towards him with unrelenting force.

Rookwood jumped up not a moment too soon as the knives hacked into an unsuspecting Death Eater behind him who fell to the ground. Rookwood looked at his fallen comrade with fear evident in his eyes. His gaze returned to Susan and widened.

Susan regarded him shrewdly. She knew she looked terrifying in her somewhat torn battle attire, her wand with a trail of smoke rising from it, her hair fallen from its clasp and riding on her shoulders in dishevelled, straight lines, her eyes blazing with adrenaline and the feel of battle. Needless to say, the two steps he took backwards with every step she took forward didn't surprise her.

"Scared Rookwood?" Susan said in a soft, threatening voice as she advanced, a predator marking its prey.

He didn't respond, but the gulp and bob of his Adam's Apple was all Susan needed to know.

"Is this how my parents felt when you killed them?" She said coldly.

At the casual mention of her deceased parents, Rookwood knew his fate was sealed, this witch was out for revenge and he was her target. Might as well have some fun with it while he was at it.

"Actually Bones, your mother was hilarious; she begged and pleaded to protect you, if it hadn't been for the Aurors arrival, we would have carved her up properly." Rookwood said arrogantly.

Those were the last words he ever said.

As soon as Rookwood spoke, Susan saw red and without consciously realizing it, she raised her wand and shot a volley of spells at the miscreant. He jumped, turned, twisted, shielded, did everything by the book, but Susan's rage would only be satiated with his blood.

A vicious cutting hex slit through his leg, he fell to the ground in agony. Susan stood above him and in his last moments, Rookwood truly felt like a warrior-goddess had chanced upon him.

"Never under-estimate your opponent fool, it can cost you your life." Susan drawled, she flicked her wand and a large gash appeared on Rookwood's neck and he screamed. Slowly the blood let out and he died.

Susan took long, deep breaths to calm her; she raised her eyes to see that the battle had stopped completely in her area. The Death Eaters and her comrades were looking at her with pure terror; she stared back defiantly. Susan raised her wand determinedly and shot angry red sparks in the air, her voice magically amplified.

"Death Eaters, beware! The Light will scorch you till your final breath!"

With that said Susan twirled in an elegant circle and fired spells in every direction. Her team knew better and ducked as soon as she made the first motion to twirl. The spells ricocheted in every direction striking targets indiscriminately. Death Eaters fell by the dozens as the smarter ones of them ducked sooner than the not so bright.

Susan stopped her angry turn, her hair flailing around her in mad rings creating an almost halo-like image on her head.

Five Death Eaters advanced towards her as the fighting renewed. Despite the heavy cost to their numbers Susan had just inflicted, her numbers had already suffered hefty blows. Susan looked at the oncoming figures with challenge sparkling in her eyes. Judging by their stances and manner of approach, they were more on the muscle side rather than the brain side.

Susan raised her wand and readied her body for combat. The first Death Eater fired a blood red spell in her direction; Susan jumped to the side and bypassed it. She then raised a rounded shield around herself that covered her from all sides. She surveyed the attacking Death Eaters shrewdly, her shield holding strength second to none. She knew she could hold them off for a few more minutes.

She turned her head and surreptitiously nodded to Ian. With that silent exchange passed, Ian started a volley of curses on the Death Eaters who were concentrating solely on Susan and her seemingly impenetrable shield. The other Light Warriors joined the fray and attacked relentlessly and soon enough the Death Eaters fell in a crumpled heap.

Susan lowered her shield and fell to one knee, supporting her weight with marginal difficulty, although it didn't look like it but that curse did take a lot out of her. She looked at the scared visages of her teammates and sighed.

"Mask your fear and unite warriors, this fight has only begun."

Her eyes met Ian's and he nodded resolutely, he turned to the tired-looking warriors, "Death Eaters beware!"

The others picked up the chant, "The Light will scorch you till your final breath!"

Susan closed her eyes as she felt the hope of her team return with renewed vigour.

She elongated her wand into a sword and pushed it into the ground, forcing her tired and battle-weary body up. An ethereal wind passed through her hair as she regarded the other side of the battlefield, which was still fighting.

She raised her arm to her face, a deep gash cut through her wrist, her mark of protection, her penchant for success, her Blaise...

She raised her sword in the air the cheering team looked at her expectantly, "The Light strikes!"

Susan Bones transformed in that moment. It was a long-coming change but it had finally been completed. The sixteen-year-old girl was gone and now a warrior stood in her stead, grazing for battle and lusting for victory. The Light should count its lucky stars that she was on their side.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Hogwarts Inner Sanctum

02:30 AM

Luna Lovegood stood calmly beside Albus Dumbledore; she knew what was coming but that didn't mean she had to like it.

"Are you sure Albus? Is there another way that you, despite your infinite wisdom have overlooked?" She asked trying very hard to keep the distress out of her tone.

Albus smiled sadly, "If, Miss Lovegood, you in your infinite wisdom do find an alternate solution then I am, by all means amenable to it. But seeing as the hour of action is upon us, we are left bereft and lacking in choices. As you once said, 'this is war' and we are its sacrifices." Albus finished with resolution.

Luna sighed and looked away, "What is this place?"

Albus smiled widely, even in the direst of situations always prepared to lecture and be the teacher that he was on the inside, "This, Miss

Lovegood, is the Inner Sanctum of Hogwarts: A sacred, almost unreal and ethereal place where the forces and wards of Hogwarts combine to form a unified front. From here, the Headmasters of Hogwarts have been able to manipulate the calling of War and bring change to the land. It is the very greatest achievement and secret of the four founders of Hogwarts."

Luna regarded it with interest, "Well, its pretty white."

Albus faltered, "Is that really all you notice?"

Luna shrugged, "Headmasters of Hogwarts have generally been heralded as one of the most powerful wizards of their times, the founders' greatness is unquestionable. This room is powered by their power, not the room itself, so yes; it is a pretty, white room; nothing more, nothing less. Now if we look at the Room of Requirement, that is one to consider with interest, much more than this pretty, white room in any case..."

Albus shook his head in wonder, "Only you could insult and compliment at the same time."

"Actually Albus, I believe it is called a back-handed compliment. Draco uses it quite frequently, in fact once—" Luna stopped abruptly as thoughts of Draco which she had been so ferociously suppressing sprang to the forefront of her mind and she was silent in sadness once again.

Albus laid a heavy hand on her dainty shoulder in a show of support, "Forgive me Luna, but this is necessary for the Greater Good."

Luna nodded imperceptibly and shook Albus' hand off her shoulder. She approached the large white pillar, the only one in the room.

"When I start the incantation Albus, you must make sure that the power of the spell stays within the sanctum, not an ounce should leave." Luna said seriously.

"Luna, perhaps I could take up the chant and you could control the spell..." Albus' voice trailed off.

"I appreciate the gesture Albus," Luna said with feigned happiness, "But the truth is that I am not strong enough to enclose your power.

If you chant then we will all be ruined, but if I chant only Draco will be ruined."

"You forget yourself..." Albus reminded gently.

"There is no point in remembering the ones who are gone, we must remember those in pain for losing the one they love. Draco has learnt that he can survive without me, this separation has been beneficial to him and he must be constantly reminded that he can and will go on, no matter what. Promise me Albus." She finished fiercely.

"I love you as if you were my own grand-child Luna, I promise with all I am worth." Albus replied solemnly.

Luna cheered up but the unending sadness behind her smile was obvious to even a blind man.

"Let us begin Albus." Luna finally said, "The time comes upon us."

Albus nodded lightly, tears brimming his twinkle-less eyes. He took ten steps outwards and stood at the edge of the room.

Luna faced the pillar; she raised her hands and began her chant.

"oraculum fulsi , vicis supervenio

Obscurum embodies animus of lux lucis

recipero meus virtualamen , servo nos totus"

A deep darkness took form and appeared in front of Luna. She looked at it with the eye of an observer, not flinching but neither appearing overly confident. The darkness shifted into a humanoid form and faced her.

"Thou art not worthy of note." The Darkness proclaimed after considering Luna for a few short minutes.

Luna raised her hands and a hazed vortex engulfed the Darkness. It looked at her with amusement but didn't try to stop her.

"Darkness cannot be hindered. But it can be trapped and erased in Light." Luna responded in a monotone.

"Thou art a naïve child." It responded emotionlessly, "Perchance thou wish'st my acceptance, let the verdict be known, the Darkness accepts untainted, unfettered souls; souls like thee, tied by soul to another art deemed unsatisfactory."

Luna shook from her toes to her head.

"Would the sacrifice of a severed soul-bonded one suffice the Darkness?" She asked defeated.

The Darkness looked at her calculatingly, after heavy deliberation, it nodded.

Luna brought her wand to her heart and with tears freely falling from her eyes she said clearly, "I, Luna Cassandra Lovegood, give thee, the Darkness, my soul, my love and devotion in return for the strength of the Cup of Hufflepuff. May the Cup respond to the pleas of our heroine and leave her untainted, may it bring about the end of the Dark Lord."

The Darkness nodded and with one swift motion he looked back at her, "Done."

The vortex died and the Darkness dissipated.

Albus ran forward to Luna with undisguised happiness, when close enough he saw the pain and resigned look etched across her face. In that instant he knew, they had achieved the unthinkable, they had struck a deal with the Devil.

"Luna?"

"The Cup has been granted permission to service Hermione, she may now fulfil the prophecy as have I fulfilled mine." Luna said in a deep monotone, no emotion coming through.

"Your prophecy?" Albus asked in a whisper, incredulity clear in his tone.

"The third Child's ascent,

Lies in the chalice,

The choice is the Daughter's,

The Son's Power on the balance." Luna finished sadly.

"But the Daughter is Hermione!" Dumbledore implored.

Luna looked at him sadly. "Hermione is a Daughter of Prophecy and so am I. Our destinies are intertwined in this war as we are both intertwined with Harry's heart and love. Harry once told me that if Hermione were not in his life, I would be 'the one' for him. That created my part in this war. The choice is mine and Harry's 'power', his love, his Hermione and the strength she gives him, 'lies on the balance'."

"Luna..." Dumbledore said unsure of how to continue, wondering if there even was such a thing as providing comfort in such a happenstance.

Luna shook her head in defiance, "we do not have much time, the Darkness does not take kindly to tardiness."

With one last, sorrowful look at the girl Albus had come to regard as his own kin, he turned and led her out of the Inner Sanctum, no longer pure and fertile, but marred with the death of the innocence of one of the greatest witch's of the age.

Luna closed her eyes briefly as she followed Albus out, ready to join the eventual battle she knew was congregating in the Great Hall. The time for war is now!

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Castle Inner Grounds

02:00 AM

Blaise Zabini looked at the oncoming Death Eaters with pure wrath in his eyes. Although on the front he had maintained a relatively calm façade, inside, he was a turbulent wasteland of emotions.

Everything was sticking together and making an unbelievable mesh of countless conflicting ideals and beliefs.

A stray Death Eater swiped a spell in his direction breaking Blaise from his momentary reverie. He ducked swiftly, hours of ingrained battle-skills on full alert allowed him to avoid any form of hurt whatsoever.

Blaise jumped in the air quickly and fired quickly at his surprised assailant, "Stupefy! Expelliarmus! Stupefy! Sectumsempra! Diffindo Zara!"

The disarmament jinx and stunners harmlessly bounced off the Death Eater's shield and he moved out of the path of the last curse. What the Death Eater was not prepared for was the cutting jinx to be a physical manifestation rather than a magical energy. Three sharp blades ceaselessly passed through the magical shield erected by the Death Eater and cut him in his shoulder, knee and the final one was embedded in his heart. The Death Eater stopped and gasped, his eyes widening in shock as he immediately fell to the ground, spitting up blood in a hazy mess, till a few shudders later, he crumpled and died.

By the time this came to pass, Blaise had already moved onto two more opponents and had dispatched them to similar fates as those before them. Blaise was in a frenzy, not even realizing when he became steadily more and more violent with his attacks. He attacked and killed indiscriminately until he felt a hand strongly grasp his shoulder, he turned angrily, his eyes alight with madness only to dim considerably when faced with Justin.

The fighting continued around them but the two looked at each other. It was a moment, probably lasted a second or so, but it was what Blaise needed. The look on Justin's face was clear as daylight, 'I will not hand over my best mate to a madman.'

Blaise turned and attacked with his usual finesse, but the anger, the monster surging and willing to break free under him was gnawing at his insides, just dying to be let out again, thirsting and lusting for blood of the guilty.

The battle progressed to what was rapidly becoming a Stalemate unless reinforcements didn't arrive soon enough.

"Blaise Andres Zabini!" Came an angry call from his back that Blaise could have recognized at any given moment: The sound of his mother's voice.

Blaise paled having made the realization and turned, a frown marring his features, his inner demons bashing against the restraints he had tightly shut them under.

Fernanda Mariana Christina Alexandra Zabini-Vicunã was not a happy woman. Her son, her own flesh and blood had relegated against their master and brought endless shame to the name and House of Zabini.

"Mother." He replied with his coldness and distance that once made Fernanda's heart swell with pride, now made her scorn in disgust at the traitor.

"You have disgraced the family name Zabini!"

Blaise chuckled humourlessly as he deflected and killed another Death Eater to his left without breaking eye-contact with his mother. "Care to elaborate."

Fernanda Zabini-Vicunã was a strong witch, formidable even, if one doubted her strength, they need only look at the number of men that had passed through her clutches and perished. But she had always loved her son irrevocably, treating him like the Slytherin and Death Eater she expected him to be. Seeing her good son, turn into a Light Wizard was perhaps the harshest blow to her honour that she could have encountered.

"You have gone against your family, your honour, your duty, your master! Blaise Zabini I hereby disown you! Blaise Zabini I hereby curse you with the magic of Zabini, you are and always will be worthless, a traitor, never loved, never accepted. Never to be held in the venerated ranks of Pureblood Society." Although she showed no emotion, Fernanda felt the uncommon feel of tears prickle her eyes.

Blaise looked on in horror at his mother. She was always distant but Blaise never doubted her love for him.

"I'm sorry to hear that." He said turning around and rejoining the fray, his anger growing but still being kept under check.

Fernanda gasped in shock, her son had just scoffed at being disowned. She killed the two Light Warriors blocking her path and pulled her son towards her, "Die Blaise!"

She yelled and shot a spell right at Blaise's chest who continued to regard her impassively only to have his eyes bugger in shock when the realization hit.

Blaise jumped away instantaneously and just in the nick of time.

Fernanda howled in frustration and threw Death curses one after another at her son. Blaise blocked, summoned objects repeatedly till the ground around him was bare, he dodged and jumped as best as he could without attracting too much attention. This only served to fuel Fernanda's rage.

"Fight me Traitor! You are no longer my kin! Meet your doom Snake! You lived alone and you will die alone!"

The monsters raging inside Blaise broke free and Blaise fought back with unrelenting rage. He threw curse and jinx after jinx at his mother, his anger getting the better of him as he was overwhelming her but she still continued to hold her own.

Fernanda raised her brow in surprise; she hadn't expected such a show from her traitorous son.

She threw a green curse resembling an Avada at her son who dodged it effortlessly. His battle, his fighting, his magic were unparalleled and for once, the curtain blinding Fernanda to unrestrained prejudice rose for just a second to appreciate the man her son had become.

Blaise looked at his mother with abject fury, his previous attempts at subjugation and hope to tire her out were thrown out of the window when her comments struck home.

"I am not a traitor, I stayed true to the side I picked and I picked the Light."

He seethed throwing a curse right at her, which she ducked to avoid, her eyes widening with his words.

"I am not worthless, I have the might of the Light behind my back, to guide me, make me and forge me into a Warrior!" He yelled from the field and some of the nearby fighters stopped to look at Blaise, his magic making the air around him crackle with electricity.

Blaise's magic manifested around him in white circles and shrouded his appearance in magic; he looked like he was breathing magic.

"I am not alone because Susan Zabini, my love, my life, my Light and above all else, my wife stands by me every step of the way!"

Fernanda stopped dead in her tracks at his proclamation, falling right into the line of attack of his spell. She barely managed to erect a shield in time to block it partially but her wand arm was damaged.

"I am Blaise Zabini, proud Slytherin, husband to Susan Zabini and Warrior of the Light." He said majestically.

Fernanda breath was caught in her throat. The prickling sensation of tears returned as she saw the magnificence her son had acquired. The same magnificence that had once drawn her to his father, the same magnificence that had drawn her to the Dark Lord, but he derived it from the Light not the Darkness.

The Dark Lord was wrong, power can be achieved even when in Light, for true power is found in oneself.

Fernanda stood and approached her son, "We stand on opposite sides son," she said clutching her bleeding arm, "but you are my son nonetheless."

Blaise's magic began to reduce to white swirls and he relaxed his tense posture.

"Mother..." He said hesitantly.

Fernanda smiled slightly but her expression froze, her mind froze and her world ended. She fell to the ground dead.

Blaise caught her mid-fall, his mind and senses in utter shock.

"How touching," came the sinister voice of Lord Voldemort, "I told her before, but she refused to listen, yes traitor? Do you think your traitor Mum got the fate she deserved?"

Blaise howled in utter madness and flung his magic at the Dark Lord, who though slightly alarmed managed to throw it off seamlessly, "Feisty aren't you? Well don't worry, you will be joining her soon enough."

Voldemort said as he raised his wand. Every person, Light and Dark alike, stared on in horror; he pointed his wand at the battered Blaise Zabini.

"Light follow protocol!" Blaise yelled and all the Light Warriors dissipated instantaneously. Dumbledore had given all the Light Wizards the ability to apparate on Hogwarts, aided by Harry whom Hogwarts recognized as the heir.

Voldemort looked at the retreated figures in surprise. He judged Blaise calmly and then just as the curse was about to leave his lips, he stopped and laughed, "I'll make you a bargain Snake, bring me Harry Potter and I let you live."

Silence.

Blaise got shakily to his feet, the death of his mother still bearing on his shoulders, he came and stood in front of Voldemort with unbelievable courage, not flinching even once.

Voldemort extended his hands in a show of support of accepting the wayward child. Blaise stood right in his face and then.... He spat... Right in Voldemort's face.

"Fuck you."

Voldemort calmly scourgified his face and looked Blaise's defiance with interest.

"That was a mistake Snake, but you need not worry, you will pay for it."

A flash of green light, the last thing Blaise saw was a vision of Susan dancing in the meadows, the sun shining in her hair, happiness radiating from her very being, the picture of beauty and freedom.

Blaise Zabini fell to the ground... Dead.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Entrance Hall

02:30 AM

Harry Potter stood staring at the Entrance of his home. He turned his head slightly to the side to see the place that he had called his first and perhaps only home. He had learnt everything he knew within these hallowed halls: his first broomstick ride, his friendship with Hermione and Ron, his understanding of magic, everything happened right here. His moments of casual laughter and ease, his freedom from the burdens of the world, all right here... And there was no way in hell he would let any Dark Lord come and change that for him. Hogwarts was his sanctuary and he would protect it with all that he was worth.

As if on queue, the Entrance Doors burst open and in walked in the Man of the Hour, the Dark Lord himself.

"Potter, perhaps we can finish where we left off." Voldemort hissed menacingly.

Harry looked on calmly, he did not plan on making the same mistake twice and underestimate Voldemort, "Why Tom, how's that new body working for you? Cosy I presume?"

Voldemort rumbled angrily and threw an Avada Kedavra at Harry.

And so it began.

Harry jumped and threw back a curse of his own. Voldemort deflected it easily and started throwing a volley of curses at Harry. His Death Eaters began integrating with the Light Warriors and battle raged all around them.

Harry saw, from the corner of his eye, Susan try and protect some wounded warriors by taking five Death Eaters at the same time. He concentrated all his efforts on trapping Voldemort, he had to control this monster before it was too late.

"Avada Kedavra!" Voldemort yelled for the upteenth time.

"Expelliarmus!" Harry shot back.

Their wands connected and a golden cage erupted around them. Harry focused his everything, his entire being into those beads because somewhere deep inside of him, he knew that this would be the last time he would be in this situation, either he would die or Voldemort would.

The struggle ensued, the bead remaining unmoving in the centre.

Voldemort chuckled from his side, "How does it feel Potter?"

Harry furrowed his sweating eyebrows in concentration.

"What do you mean Tom? I hardly think this is the time for a tea-party conversation." Harry shot back like he always does.

"You are responsible for all these deaths, you are aware of that I presume."

That struck a cord with Harry and coupling Harry's overwhelming need to blame himself with his hero complex, caused his focus to weaken as he thought of all the bodies that he had seen today. All the good people who had sacrificed their lives for the Light were gone now, all because he couldn't prepare for this battle faster and earlier.

"Screw you Tom!" Harry screamed, his focus returning, forcing his errant thoughts to dissipate, he could blame himself afterwards.

The beads moved back to the centre and the attrition continued, carnage reigned around him but Harry didn't see anything. His eyes, his magic and his being were solely focused on the battle of wills with Voldemort.

Voldemort grunted with effort, he needed to do something, "Do remember Potter, that many of your friends have fallen today. How do you think Miss Bones, ah Mrs. Zabini will feel when she realizes that she has been widowed?"

Harry took pause, Blaise was... was... NO!

"YOU BASTARD!" Harry yelled emphatically, "you FUCKING BASTARD!"

The beads came crashing down on Harry as his concentration wavered and ended. Harry...lost.

Voldemort laughed as the demons of the dead Death Eaters erupted from Harry's wand and Harry stood trembling from head to foot at the other end. No one noticed what was happening inside the Golden Cage, but something had definitely happened, the crackle of electricity was no longer present, magic no longer fought magic.

Harry's face faced downwards, his hair hanging around his face, obscuring it. It started as a rumble, then a chuckle and then a full-blown laugh.

Harry threw his head back and laughed uncontrollably. Voldemort stared at him nonplussed, which was quite a disturbing expression on his snake-like face.

"Potter!" He called, "You lose!"

Silence.

Harry stopped laughing and looked at Tom incredulously, "No Tom, you lose!"

Voldemort now had his opportunity to laugh.

"I am immortal fool." He stated simply.

"Oh," Harry said with a furrowed eyebrow, as if he were pondering deeply on this conundrum, "Really, well is that perhaps because of your horcruxes?"

Voldemort's amusement vanished instantly; he looked at Harry with anger and fear.

Harry raised his wand and whispered a few words.

Four objects materialized and fell to the floor and Voldemort looked like he was about to be sick. A ring. A locket. A diary. A diadem.

Voldemort sneered, "You still do not have them all, although I will make you pay dearly for revealing my secret."

"Oh don't I?" Harry asked mockingly, "Neville, bring forth the head!"

Neville raised his wand from somewhere in the fray and summoned something; it landed with a thud in front of Voldemort who gave a large scream of anger. There fell to the floor the dead snake, Nagini, Voldemort's familiar and horcrux.

"Hermione..." Harry called out.

Hermione stepped forward, a gash on her cheek but otherwise unharmed, she placed her hand in her pocket and pulled out a cup, the Cup of Hufflepuff and raised it heavenwards. Voldemort looked in abject horror as every one of his horcruxes were revealed to be useless and void of his soul fragments. Potter was right, he was mortal.

Potter! It was his entire fault.

"POTTER!" Voldemort screamed in a rage unseen by anyone before, "Avada Kedavra!"

Harry stood calmly as he saw a green light come surging towards him. It needed to be done.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Entrance Hall

03:00 AM

Hermione Granger looked on in horror as the green light went towards Harry. She knew it was necessary, she knew Harry would

emerge from it unscathed, but that didn't mean that she had to like it!

"HARRY!" She yelled involuntarily as the green light crashed into her love and he collapsed. In the last second before it hit him, he looked at her, his green eyes sparkling with love and mischief, a tiny smirk playing across his face.

Harry fell to the floor and as if on cue, so did the Dark Lord. The hero and villain seemed dead.

The battle stopped. Everyone stopped. Not a word was uttered, not a spell casted. Both sides seemed lost.

A second passed by and nobody moved, the hall was eerily silent.

Hermione was trembling, she held the Cup of Hufflepuff in her hands and squeezed it, speaking to it, begging it to reveal its magic.

Speak to me Helga! Help me save my love...

The Cup started to vibrate, a light began forming around it and it jerked in Hermione's hands that were trying desperately to control it.

Voldemort moved, his body seemingly dead came to reality and Voldemort stood on his feet with some effort. Harry remained motionless and dread filled Hermione's heart.

Wake up Harry! Please, please wake up!

The Cup was now shining and throwing sparks in every direction.

Voldemort looked around at the Warriors of the Light with arrogance, he raised his hand in the sky and the Dark Mark erupted in the ceiling of the Great Hall.

"Victory is Mine!" He said loudly and every Death Eater erupted in cheers.

The Cup in Hermione's hands was now emanating a brilliant white light that was slowly engulfing Hermione's body. Hermione was so shocked by the sight in front of her and the lack of movement by Harry that she barely noticed. Slowly, her consciousness ebbed

away from her and the last thing she registered was her body and consciousness failing her as she fell to the floor, unconscious.

Location Unknown

Time Unknown

Hermione opened her eyes gently; she looked to her right and then her left.

Emptiness.

Hermione stood up quickly and screamed the only name in her mind, "HARRY!"

A few seconds passed and then a response came. The answering call was everything Hermione ever needed to hear, it was Harry, her Harry.

He came running towards her, his eyes alight with magic and happiness at having her here.

He ran all the way up to her, till he was standing right in front of her half-sitting up body. They held each other's gaze, their magic, their love; their lives now seemed complete. He held his hand out for her to grasp, she looked at his hand, her brown eyes alight with wonder, curiosity and something else, something Harry couldn't recognize: A twinkle, not like Dumbledore annoying, know-it-all twinkle, but a different kind of twinkle; a light, a type of colouring in those perfect chocolate pools.

She took his hand and he held her up, he pressed his hands behind her back and pulled her close. Her head angled towards his and in one swift motion, their lips were joined.

Hermione didn't know how long they just stood there, their lips locked in utter passion, but for once, she didn't care. Her lips languished against his, pressed, nibbling, exploring, re-establishing what she had been denied for so long.

Slowly, reluctantly, he pulled himself back and looked in her eyes, green met brown and the world seemed blissful.

"Hermione..." he said it like a chant, something to calm him and give him strength.

"Harry..." She breathily responded.

"I love you." They said simultaneously, stopped and then looked at each other in surprise.

She moved to leave his embrace and he pulled her closer, pressing her tightly to himself, she wrapped her arms around his neck, happy in her position and in no hurry to complain.

"Where do we go from here?" She asked after a while of contentment.

"We can go nowhere but up from here, my dear." He shot back.

She pulled herself back, as much as he would let her, and looked at him sceptically.

"Excuse me?" She asked with a cocked eyebrow, "Are you suggesting we forsake everyone we love, everyone who has died and fought for our cause?"

Harry looked away from her, refusing to meet her eyes.

"Think about it Hermione, we can be together, no wars, no Voldemort, no responsibilities, no expectations; just you and me, together and happy, like it's supposed to be." He begged her.

Hermione smiled, tears shining in her eyes, "No Harry," he sighed irritated and looked away from her eyes but she forced his eyes back on her and said resolutely, "No Harry, we have a duty to fulfil."

Harry sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose tiredly, "I thought you might say that."

She carefully took his arm in her own, "They're waiting for you Harry."

He clasped his hand around hers tightly, "they're waiting for us, my love."

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Entrance Hall

03:15 AM

Hermione slowly came to the world, she saw the Entrance Hall around her and regarded the fight in front of her shrewdly, Dumbledore and Voldemort were locked in battle as the Death Eaters were being pushed outside Hogwarts by the overwhelming and grieving Light Warriors.

She immediately raised herself from the ground and saw Harry carefully rise as well. Their eyes met and he smiled his boyish smile and Hermione smiled back. Their time had come.

Harry jumped into battle and attacked Voldemort.

Voldemort's eyes widened, as did everyone else's in the Entrance Hall. The Light Warriors cheered and pushed the Death Eaters with renewed vigour. A stray killing curse was sent to Harry and he ducked, throwing a purple one towards Voldemort who deflected it easily.

Harry stepped forward proudly, "Your time has come Voldemort, and you will die!"

Voldemort backed away uncertainly, he raised his wand and said, "You can still not defeat me Potter, even if you managed to destroy my horcruxes."

"I don't intend on killing you, Tom, I intend on delivering justice." Harry said calmly.

"For killing the innocent, for the murder of countless wizards, witches, muggles and magical creatures alike, for spilling the blood of a unicorn, for orphaning numerous children, for cradle-robbing endless households, for disrupting the peace and happiness of the land, I call you to justice!"

Neville came from behind Harry and said, "For assault, I pronounce you guilty! Diffindo!"

Voldemort was so shocked that he didn't even realize when his spell towards Neville harmlessly bounced off of him and his cutting curse went through his shield and cut his arm off.

Voldemort screamed in agony.

Susan stood behind the Dark Lord and when she spoke, she garnered his attention, "For murder, I pronounce you guilty! Diffindo!"

Another cutting curse easily went through the Dark Lord's shield and sliced cleanly through his leg. He fell down clutching his stub, his spell towards Susan bounced off of her too.

Luna came to his left, her wand raised, her eyes glazed over, "For war, I pronounce you guilty! Diffindo!"

Voldemort didn't even try to curse Luna, but her spell cut through his second leg.

Voldemort lay in a bloody mess as Hermione came up, "For death, I pronounce you guilty! Diffindo!"

Voldemort's wand arm was severed off.

Harry came and stood in front of Voldemort.

"I allowed you to kill me Voldemort, I died to protect my friends, my family and my home. I died for them just like my mother died for me, and now your spells, your harm can no longer be inflicted on any of them, because I died for them to be protected from you. Your reign is over."

Harry pointed his wand and Voldemort's heart whose breaths came out in erratic gusts.

Harry whispered but everyone heard him, "May it be remember that justice was served to the guilty. Your penalty is death. Avada Kedavra."

Voldemort's eyes, filled with fear, froze and he died.

Luna Lovegood screamed an ungodly scream and fell to the ground. Draco rushed to her side and held her tightly, "Luna!"

"Draco, my love," she said kindly, running a hand across his face, "I made a deal with the Darkness, I gave my soul for our victory."

"What?" Draco yelled shocked, "Luna! This is bullshit! You're not leaving me!"

"I'm sorry my love, but remember you can live and you will love again. I love you..." Were her last words.

Draco shook her urgently, begging her to wake, she didn't.

That night many celebrated and many cried. Harry, Hermione, Neville, Daphne, Justin and Astoria spent the night consoling Susan and Draco, two distinctive screams and their loud raucous sobs echoed throughout Hogwarts along with the cries of those who had lost as well.

"LUNA!"

"BLAISE!"

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Hogwarts Lake

10:00 AM

Harry Potter stood staring at the scenery in front of him, his thoughts elsewhere. Hermione carefully came and slid her arms around his torso and rested her head on his shoulder.

No words were exchanged between them, after their years of friendship and endless love; no words need be spoken. They had died and gone to hell and back for their love.

Harry turned around and spoke to her, she nodded and responded and they slowly walked back into the castle, to pick up the pieces and continue their lives from where they left off.

The echo of their softly spoken words rustled in the wind till it faded away and became just like those who had died in the war, a memory.

"It's over." He said.

"It is." She said.

THE END

I hope you guys enjoyed it and thanks for sticking with HPTTP for sooo long! Its just the Epilogue left which will come up in a week.

This is it guys!

Please REVIEW!

Writing this Epilogue was painful, partly because I didn't really want this fic to end, but mostly because I didn't want it to be another long chapter where we went through everyone's happy lives, I just wanted everyone to know where everyone ended up. So I apologize for the delay.

EPILOGUE

The sun was shining brightly and wherever he went, people were celebrating. Crackers were bursting and people were dancing all along the streets of Hogsmeade. It was after all, the wizarding world's day of festivity, of happiness and freedom, of the realization of a dream that peace; everlasting peace could be achieved, if for the time being alone. He smiled slightly when he saw a small boy run ahead of his mother. His lithe body moved between the crowds with ease as he slipped in and out of hordes of people while his mother ran behind him with surprising agility, flailing her wand with pointless summoning spells to bring him back.

"Get back here!" The mother yelled to no avail.

He chuckled lightly and opened his arms for the little boy as his mother came running behind him, her blonde hair, turning grey with time was in a haphazard fashion and she looked ruffled. When her eyes fell on him, they lit up in an odd sort of way, he looked at her calmly, his lips set in a grim, if still polite, smile while he balanced the little boy in his arms and his right hip.

"How goes it Susan?" He asked her lightly.

Susan shook her head and held out her hands for her son, the smiling boy hugged his uncle hard before relenting and returning to his mother's embrace.

"I'm fine, the real question is how you are." She said eyeing him warily.

He smiled in a sad sort of way, his eyes looking away as if in a distant memory. Susan just waited, knowing that he still felt the pain of the war, the horrors that they all went through. She patiently held her squealing son, who was determined to join in the enjoyment of the day, his arms flying all over the place, trying to make his mother let go of him.

"Behave yourself!" Susan said sternly, the little boy looked at her with big, shining eyes, he pouted his lips and wrapped his arms around her bare neck. Susan shook her head in the negative, repeating the word 'no' over and over again, but the boy was determined as ever. When she looked deep into his eyes, she just couldn't help herself and smiled her assent.

He watched her place her son on the ground, kiss his forehead as a mother would and told him to be home in an hour. The little boy without waiting further jumped into the fray and didn't look back.

"...And be careful!" She called after, knowing full well he hadn't listened to a word she told him.

She shook her head absently and turned to face him again to see him smile, a small smile, a genuine smile one she hadn't seen in a long time.

"I hadn't realized how big he'd become." He said after a little while.

Susan just shrugged, "Children grow."

He nodded and looked at the little boy again, his dark olive skin stood out sharply against the others and he had "mysteriously" all the pretty girls dancing around him. He shook his head, "Seven-year-old Blaise Andrès Zabini Junior, he is the embodiment of his father."

Susan smiled, the kind of smile one would see when experiencing a bittersweet memory. "He is..." She said finally, then shook her head and turned back to face him, "so how long are you staying for?"

He turned his attention towards her, "Not long, perhaps till the end of the day, maybe part of the night before I head out again."

Susan's nose scrunched up, "I really don't think that's appropriate, you come home after God-knows how long and then you expect us to just let you—"

He held up his hand ending all arguments, letting her know that he appreciated her opinion, but it was futile. She huffed but then invited him in for tea anyway.

Once inside Susan's home, he was settled rather happily on the couch as she served them tea, "So where have you ended up Susan? Last I heard your Aunt Amelia was personally requested to ask you to takeover after her as Head of the DMLE."

Susan chuckled and sat down after serving him his tea, stirring her cup while answering, "In any other station in my life, I would have taken the job in a heartbeat, it was my dream, to fill my Aunt's shoes," her voice trailed off and they sat in silence for a few seconds. Susan then realized she had just let her statement hang and continued, he posed no questions, "but Blaise was only four-years-old at the time and I couldn't leave him for such a demanding and taxing job, so I turned it down."

He nearly choked on his tea as she looked at his reaction and laughed, "But I am currently, very content with my employment as Defense Against the Dark Arts professor at Hogwarts."

He was even more surprised by this; his expression showed that clearly, "How long have you been on?"

She smiled, "This will be my fourth year teaching, I broke the curse!"

He smirked and gave her a thumbs up, "So where is everyone else?"

She smiled on, "Well Daphne and Neville are very happy up at Hogwarts as well. Neville teaches Herbology at the school and Daphne decided that she was content taking care of her six children," here Susan snorted, "or at least trying to manage that horde of monsters."

His eyes widened marginally, "There are six Longbottoms now! Are they trying to beat the Weasleys?"

"Probably now that I think about it, although I hope they have a different end than the Weasleys." She mused.

"Okay hold on," he said placing his teacup on the table and asked his questions, "First tell me about the Longbottom children and then about the Weasleys."

Susan shrugged, "Well you would know if you were around more often," he just sighed tiredly and she decided to just drop it for now, "Nev and Daph have had the twins: Frank Blaise first, then little Alice Luna, them you know about," she asked reassuring his knowledge and he nodded, "well then it was like a storm! They had Susan Maria, Harry Ernest, Astoria Hermione and the last Longbottom was Draco Neville."

"The Weasleys?" he asked over her raised eyebrow, which he knew was her challenging him for not having known that four more Longbottoms existed in the world, let alone their names.

"Molly was distraught after the war because, well, I honestly can't imagine living without Blaise and she lost three of her children, the fact that she still lived after that trauma is commendable. Arthur was in no better shape emotionally. The two took a one-way portkey to the continent where Arthur landed a job in the French Ministry of Magic with L'Association d'échanges internationaux (The Association of International Exchanges). Last I heard, they were much happier than they had been in a long while." She finished on a bright note.

"The kids that survived?" He beckoned.

Susan looked thoughtful, "Well, I know that Bill and Fleur stayed here, with their posts at Gringotts, their oldest is going to start Hogwarts with Blaise in three years, Victoire Weasley; they have two more getting ready to go. Charlie Weasley is in Romania, still unmarried much to his mother's displeasure." Here Susan grinned conspiratorially.

He leaned in, wanting the gossip, "What's the joke?" He asked.

"Well we had our annual Order reunion a few years back," she tossed a napkin at him which he expertly dodged, "which you missed you sodding fool! Anyway," she said waving her hand, "Neville and Daphne wanted to set Charlie up with Astoria, sure there was a slight age gap but the two were good friends since the war; Astoria tries to get close to him and he went mental!"

Susan started laughing and he looked at her confusedly, "Why?"

Susan calmed enough to continue, "Well, he had had a little too much of Ogden's finest and he was a little too jumpy and hasty to conclusions about Astoria's actions. Therefore, he decided to tell her, quite frankly to the face and I quote, 'you're pretty but I bat for the other team'." The two cracked up as she relived the memory and he just tried imagining Astoria's face.

"Any Molly doesn't know?" Susan shook her head trying to see through the tears of mirth, "They're afraid that the shock might just be the last straw that makes her snap for good, turns out she's frightened to the bone by homosexuality and homosexuals!"

They continued laughing for a bit longer and Susan continued when they calmed considerably, "The twins are doing fine, they settled down both of them, Fred married Angelina Johnson, that Gryffindor Quidditch player when we were in school and George got together with Gabrielle Delacour, Fleur's younger sister. They both have two new Weasley additions, both sets of twins and more frighteningly like their prankster fathers than any I've ever seen. I am not looking forward to them coming to Hogwarts. Their joke business really hit the big time, they have branches all over the magical shopping streets on the continent and last time I met George he mentioned a trip to New York while Fred was going to Bombay, they're really big now."

He smiled, "Everyone really has settled down and I remember actually seeing one of their Wizard Wheezes stores in Paris, I was quite surprised."

A silence descended and he thought of someone else, "What of Albus?"

Susan shrugged, "What do you think, still Headmaster of the School. I don't think you've seen him since that last night he tried to convince you to join the school as flying instructor."

He winced, "Yes that was quite a nasty night, I don't think I've hurled so many insults at even my worst enemy as I did that night to Albus."

Susan laughed, "He loved it! Said you have fire to make a change and still thinks so, he still talks about it."

"You're kidding!" He said excitedly.

Susan just nodded, "However nothing beats our Minister of Magic, a true bringer and believer of change to the magical world."

He laughed a little as he voiced his assent, "Who would've thought, an ambitious Slytherin in Gryffindor garbs, the Potters took over the Ministry of Magic."

Susan looked into the distance, "Its still hard to believe sometimes, but I see the changes all around me, she has done so much good in these past five years since her election and I fully expect her to get re-elected."

He smiled brightly as he raised his cup, "A toast to the greatest British Minister of Magic,"

Susan raised her cup and smiled brighter, "A revolutionary and first woman and muggle-born to hold office in our history."

"To Hermione Potter," they intoned simultaneously.

"What of Harry?" He asked conversationally.

Susan looked at him oddly, "He's fine, he loves his part-time job with the Auror corps and he sometimes does missions for the Hit-Wizards, but I am certain he's an undercover Unspeakeable," she added anyway, "he spends most of his time at home taking care of the kids while Hermione takes care of our country."

"Please tell me the Potters haven't gone down the Weasley path." He begged.

Susan just smiled, "Nah, they stopped at three: James Harry, Lily Luna and Blaise Hermione."

"Blaise Hermione?" He asked raising an eyebrow.

Susan looked away in irritation, "Don't ask!" He didn't but she answered anyway, "Well, soon after you left, after Hermione's election came through, she discovered that in the first year of holding office she's pregnant. She had the baby and the healers had predicted a boy, even the muggle contraption and those muggle

healers she insisted on seeing resonated the healer's verdict. So they decided to name the boy Blaise and I really felt that Blaise would be honoured by their gesture. Lo behold, she has a girl against all the predictions, they still named her Blaise!"

Susan huffed but smiled anyway, "Apparently Blaise seems like a unisexual name and I just let the matter drop, their gesture was what was important."

He smiled and then stood up, "It was great seeing you Suse, but I need to head out, I have someone waiting for me at the hotel."

Susan stood up as well, "Alright, but at least stop by The Three Broomsticks tonight, we're all meeting to celebrate the eighth anniversary since Voldemort's fall and would love it if you were there with us, especially today."

He shifted uncomfortably, "I hadn't realized it had been this long."

Susan sighed and sat back in her armchair, not even bothering to comment on his guilt, "None of us really blame you, you know that; we understood, doesn't mean we liked it," she added before he could comment, "but we understood nonetheless, we were just more vocal about our displeasure than our understanding."

He chuckled and shook his head disbelievingly, "Only you Susan Bones would call tying me up to your house flagpole and blackmailing me with Blaise's memory to stay as 'expressing displeasure.'"

Susan smiled, "It didn't work now did it? But I had ulterior motives to make you stay."

He cocked an eyebrow, "What do you mean?"

Susan sighed lightly but smiled through it, "Well, I was very... torn apart then. As soon as Blaise..." she nearly choked up here, "well, you know more than anyone what that feels like, but after his passing away, I realized I was pregnant. Blaise Jr. was only three when you left and I wouldn't, couldn't let you leave."

"Again, what do you mean?" He repeated.

Susan waved her hand dismissively, "I just wanted Blaise to have someone who was close to his father around, someone he could learn from about those aspects of his father that I could never tell him. He needed his Godfather then..."

Her voice trailed off on that accusatory note and she just let it pass. An awkward moment passed where Susan felt horrible for bringing it up the way she did and he felt miserable for not being there for his godson.

"Susan, I had no idea...." He started.

"Its okay, you were in no state as it is." She stood up and faced him, she smoothed out his collar and swept his hair to the side like a mother would, "In fact I'm glad you went away now, look at you, you're all grown up now and in so much better shape."

A moment passed between them, of forgiveness and understanding and he had never felt better in a long time. He then stepped away and nodded like a gentleman.

"Thank you Susan Bones for your hospitality."

Susan just shook her head at his antics but chose not to comment, "You're welcome Draco."

The young man walked to the door and opened it; he paused at the doorway and turned around to face her, "Its Draco Leonidas now."

Susan's eyes widened in surprise and she chuckled, "Only you would choose such a gaudy last name!"

He continued smiling as he gave his final goodbyes and made an exit. He really hadn't expected to run into Susan today but it was nice nonetheless, to catch up with her, see Blaise Junior and learn of how everyone else was doing.

He followed the same path he had followed a million times when in Hogsmeade. The first three years after the war, he had lived in Hogsmeade, going from pub to pub in a haze, trying to find even a semblance of a reason to continue living. He had turned up empty. Only to suddenly realize his calling one dazed morning, he had to get out of Britain and fast. Despite his friends' opposition, they

relented, well mostly, and Draco had traveled all over the world, he had after all, a mission to fulfill, which he did.

Draco discovered the Crumple-horned Snorkack. There was a reason Luna and Xeno had never found the creature, they were searching for one that was alive, but the Snorkacks had been extinct since the early 1800s, he had found the last remaining carcass of one in Romania. Perhaps he had not spent his time as wisely as some of his friends, he hadn't had any kids, he had no internationally recognized business and he certainly wasn't Minister of Magic, but he finally found the one thing he had searched for most of his adult life since the war: closure.

As the graves around him thickened, he came closer to the one he had traveled this far to visit. He came to stand right in front of a large, fading pink gravestone in Hogsmeade Graveyard, erected after the war.

Draco gently pulled out the picture of the carcass he had discovered and placed it at the base of the grave. He sat down in front of it and smiled adoringly, for a long time, he just stared at the faded picture of the love of his life on the grave.

"Luna," he said and choked up on that word alone, it sounded so unnatural coming from his lips, he hadn't said her name out loud in five years, even in his thoughts he never used her name, well for good reason seeing the tears falling from his eyes.

"It's been a while." He rasped out. "I finally found the Snorkack," he said considerably brighter.

There was a pregnant pause when Draco gathered himself and tried to face the tombstone with bloodshot eyes, "I'm sorry I haven't visited that often, but I think about you all the time, its actually quite unhealthy," he chuckled knowing that Luna would have told him exactly that had she been around. Had she survived the war. Had she stayed with him...

Unconsciously tears fell further and Draco wiped them away furiously.

A deep, calming breath later, he continued, "I've finished my duty Luna, I found closure, it took me eight years, but you always said

that Slytherins were notoriously slow at getting work done, but they did it right. I love you Luna and I always will."

He traced his hand around her portrait, "You were my soulmate," he took another breath as he retracted his hand, "But it is time for me now, to finally move on. I love you Luna more than anything else in the world, know that."

Draco stood up and turned around unsteadily. He slowly felt a soft wind pick up and blow him forwards, away from the graveyard and that particular tombstone. Draco smiled, knowing that Luna had just consented his decision, he could feel her presence in the air.

Draco closed his eyes briefly, "I love you forever my love." He said heavenwards and then purposefully walked away. He had found his purpose in life.

He walked right back into Hogsmeade and marched up to the only familiar door and knocked. It opened to reveal a ruffled Susan forcing Blaise to eat his vegetables.

Draco smiled at her surprised gaze and walked right in and sat beside Blaise who stood with his arms crossed over his chest, the picture of stubbornness.

"Something wrong?" Draco stage-whispered.

Blaise indicated the vegetables and just whined. Draco smiled, he leaned in and whispered in his ear, "You eat the vegetables and Uncle Draco teaches you how to fly."

The boy's eyes brightened immediately and he literally started inhaling the greens. Susan just stared on in shock.

When Blaise had finished his meal and gone to wash his hands, Susan sat down opposite Draco and looked at him questioningly, "Not that I don't appreciate the help, but what are you doing exactly?"

Draco smiled his winning smile, "Being the godfather I should have been."

Susan sat back and looked at him skeptically, "What about the friend you had to meet at the hotel?"

Draco looked out of the window and saw the graveyard in the distance, he then looked back at Susan and answered honestly, "It was her idea."

A little distance away, a little while ago; in the same graveyard and in front of the same fading pink tombstone, a young man professed his undying love to his late lover.

An ethereal beauty, with long swirls of flowing blonde hair sat on the tombstone and stared at his retreating back with something akin to tears in her eyes.

The beauty with protuberant blue eyes and long blonde hair waved her hand to make a strong gust of wind out of nothing. She knew he had felt her presence and she also knew that he had felt her acceptance. He walked away with renewed purpose as she sat back on the tombstone and stared at his back.

"I love you forever my love...." He whispered to no one.

A hand rested on her shoulder and the beautiful woman closed her eyes briefly, "I thought you would be here."

Another gorgeous woman, with flowing red hair and electric, killing-curse green eyes appeared beside the blonde, "Of course I am, I get to watch my son celebrate with his wife and children today," she said matter-of-factly.

The blonde chuckled, "You know Chaos, you aren't Lily Potter anymore, he's not really your son."

The redhead fixed her with an annoyed stare, "That's the pot calling the kettle black! Well Lady Luck," she stared in an childish, teasing tone, "You're not Luna Lovegood anymore, but you're still sitting on her tombstone as the love of Luna's life professed his love and you gave him permission to move on."

The blonde looked at her sharply and Chaos actually backed down, knowing she had crossed a line, "Do not forget Chaos that you owe me, I intervened in this timeline and took the place of the Lovegood

girl, her spirit was sacrificed to the Darkness because You, Destiny and Fate made a mess of everything!"

The redhead sighed and sat down on the rock beside the blonde, "We may have gone a bit too far this time, The Great One has suitably punished us three I can tell you that much."

The blonde shook her head, "Got off too light if you ask me, you were lucky."

The redhead chuckled, "My you're full of ironies today, how were we lucky when Lady Luck herself was against us?"

The blonde did not bother to dignify that with a response, they sat in silence as they saw the sun set over the Hogsmeade Hills.

"They've come a long way haven't they?" Chaos said after a while.

"They have..." Luck answered.

"You still love him." It wasn't a question and Luck had no response.

"You want him to end up with the Warrior girl, Susan am I right?" Chaos prodded.

Luck just gave a sad smile, "What I want is to be with him," she sighed and stood up, taking Chaos' hand in hers, they both disappeared to wherever goddesses go to in their free time, the last whisper from Luck wasn't heard by anyone except Luck herself, Chaos was right, she was full of ironies today, "Guess I just ran out of luck."

As the sun settled for the night to rest before the dawn of a new day, the last of the sun's rays fell upon the fading pink tombstone. A single picture lay at the base that turned over to reveal the horizontal view of the carcass of a Crumple-horned Snorkack, on the photo was written in Draco's print handwriting:

To My Love, My Inspiration and My Dream,

Forever Yours Draco Abraxas Leonidas.

The little photograph flew up in the rustling wind that was picking up as evening approached, it flew right into the tombstone and obscured the name 'Luna' till it flew into the air again and disappeared into the night sky.

The fading pink tombstone stood tall and strong, it shimmered under the starlight but no one was there to see it:

Here lies

LUNA CASSANDRA LOVEGOOD

She lived.

-THE END-

AND IT'S FINALLY OVER! Don't forget to REVIEW and let me know your final thoughts.

Also, for those of you interested: I've started a new Fic: The Journey of Four which has three parts to it: The Calling, The Journey and The War

Currently I am working on The Calling, so come and give it a read its a Harry-Hermione-Draco-Luna story though there are no ships so you can keep guessing all you want for now.

Here's also the Prologue of The Journey of Four: The Calling

PROLOGUE

THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

Sometimes I wonder why I even try? Why is it that there is a reason to live in this place? The truth is... I don't know. I trudge along day after day, trying to find the elusive 'balance'. A load of bollocks if you ask me, its complete and utter tosh. I try and try and try to find 'the light', I still can't see it. There used to be a reason, which I am sure of, a simpler time, when nothing else mattered. When the world was a simple place. Now all I have is confusing ideas and faded visions.

Broken dreams have telling shards, you can always see them, and you can always hear the clinking of glass on glass when another

dream is crumbled in front of your very eyes. I am just like everyone else; I too have broken dreams, unfulfilled desires, overwhelming passions and seas of regret. I too am a lost individual, hoping, praying for just one day, one opportunity to go back, to change... something.

The butterfly effect is an interesting phenomenon; a simple flutter can change the world, as we know it. But it is not in my place to ponder these things, it is not my role to consider the effects of such alterations. I am here to speak to you, to tell you my story, not to sway your opinion, not to make you judge the unfair world and empathize with me. I am here to recount the events that have long passed.

Some may call this a love story, others a hate story, some may call this a butchering of growth, an antithesis of maturity.

My name is Hermione Jean Granger, but you may call me Hermione, not 'Mione nor Mia nor Mi nor Herms nor Hermy nor anything else following that vein, just Hermione.

This is my story.

We don't choose our fates, our fates are sometimes chosen for us. I always believed I held the power of my life in my hand, the truth is, I didn't. Yes, I can run, but running only delays the inevitable. You see I can try to run, to just tell Fate to go screw itself and find some other person to dump its problems on; but that would be counterproductive. For a long time, I've known no one would be able to handle these problems. Fate didn't choose me, Fate made me, just the way I am, tailored to be a warrior, to fight for this unholy cause for a bunch of bastards who've deserved to die from the day that they came into existence.

Memories are awfully powerful factors that they never truly leave you. There have been points when I have wished for nothing more than to just forget, to gather my belongings, my life and goods, stuff it into a trunk and just run away. But alas, fate has dealt me a harsher hand; I cannot go. I cannot forsake the ones I love for my own survival, for what kind of survival would that be?

So I wait, I bide my time, I gather my allies, I renew my resources, there is only so much time I have before he comes knocking on my door and Fate pushes me forward with a blindfold.

The butterfly effect is an interesting phenomenon; I never really gave it much thought. A single flutter to change the world, seems impossible, but is completely true. I sometimes think maybe I am this elusive butterfly with magical wings. I do not call myself proud, but if I am to be a bringer of change, why not have wings?

I am not here to make you ponder about the changes of the world, nor am I here to bemoan the terrible hand Fate has dealt me. I am here to recount the events of a story long since passed.

Some may call this a story of adventure; others may even see it as a fantasy of epic proportions. While some find it the epitome of silly decisions, others call it the calculating motives of a sinister, underestimated foe.

My name is Harry James Potter, you will not call me the Boy-Who-Lived, but you may call me Harry.

This is my story.

People always say that I am misunderstood, probably hurting all over on the inside. What a load of bullshit! I am my own person, I stand strong and proud in the direst of situations because I have nothing to fret. People think they are better than me, others have the gall to think that they are above me, the fools will learn, they all do ultimately. People try to make me out to be the unwilling villain, the silent hero working in the shadows.

I am neither.

There is a deep darkness within my soul, a darkness that consumes me and I let it. There is no light without a shadow, there is no inevitable Fate without a binding Destiny, and there is no hero without a villain.

Yes, I am a villain and you can be bloody sure that I am proud of it!

But sometimes, in the quiet recesses of the night, when the world is asleep and the night sky is clear of grey clouds. In the silent

contemplation that encompasses my evenings, I wonder, where is my balance? Where is my inner soul? Where is my 'light'?

That's when I promptly begin to laugh.

The muggles have an interesting term; they call it the 'butterfly effect'. A stupid name created by a stupid people. The whole load doesn't know what they're blabbering about. A simple, insignificant insect that I crush under the sole of my all-too-expensive shoes would never come to be the wielder of the power that I withhold in my grasp. When the wheel of time rolls and change wafts through, I will be the one rolling the bale, not the minute fluttering of a winged butterfly.

But I am here to honour you with my story, a tale that you all will come to adore and revere, for it is of my rise to greatness.

Some may call it a tale of evolution; others might see my intense wit or tints of unimpeded sarcasm. Some may call it the tale of star-crossed lovers, some could further see it as a war cry. All of them would of course be right.

My name is Draco Abraxas Malfoy, I'm sure you've heard of me, you will call me Mr. Malfoy, if you know what's good for you.

This is my story.

Red, blue, green, orange, yellow, purple, pink, magenta, violet, gold, silver, black, white, brown, grey. Everywhere you look, a different colour assaults your vision. Big, small, gigantic, petite, ugly, pretty, monstrous, beautiful, minute, astronomical, delicate, rough, tender, gritty, unconscious, deliberate. Everywhere you look, a different object enthrals you.

Look! A bluebird! Look! A Crow! Look! A little cricket! Look! A centipede!

There is such a lovely world surrounding us all, there is so much to see, so much to explore, so much to love and so much to forgive. When I touch these wonders of nature with my bare hands, a sense of fulfilment engulfs me, mystifies me, surrounds me, consumes me, makes me, breathes into me... wait, there was something I was supposed to do... But for the life of me, I can't remember what.

Ah yes, I am here to tell you a recorded history, but that's not interesting, is it? How about I tell you a story instead? Far better in my opinion.

Well once upon a time... Oh my! Is that a butterfly?

Oh it's so lovely! They say that a single beat of its wings could change the flow of time, as we know it. Did you know that? Isn't it fascinating? I wish I could see that world, where a butterfly, a special butterfly with those magic wings, decided that the world needed changing and just... did it! It would be so interesting!

Well little butterfly, I have to take my leave now, but if you decided to flutter, well 'flutter', you let me know, I know just the Gryffindor to lend me a camera for the occasion. A lovely young lad by the name of Creevey. Sweet chap, cursed with a terrible name though. I can feel his pain. Why take a picture you ask? Well, I'm not one to be involved in the action of events, I'm an observer from the sidelines of history.

Oh but our story is still to be told! Well let me tell you, its not really a story, and I don't think I've ever told anyone the entire story before so they've never been able to tell me what kind of a story it is, but they just said there were too many little things in it. Funny though, isn't it?

I'm Luna Cassandra Lovegood, some people call me Loony but I like my name as it is, it shows my reverence to the moon-goddess.

Oh! And this is my story.

Come read it Journey of Four: The Calling

~ Gatonio.